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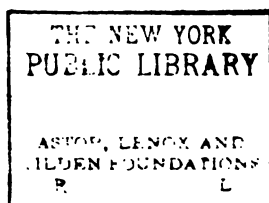
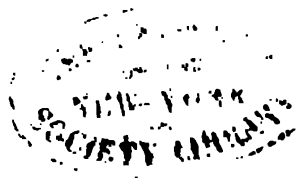




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DAVIS









“‘I know where she’s going,’ he said.”—*Frontispiece.*

THE GREEN CLOAK

BY
YORKE DAVIS

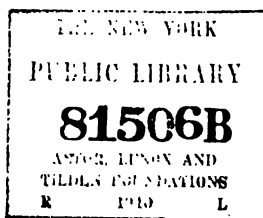
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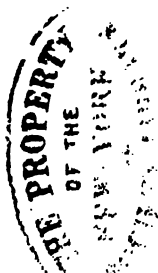
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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE MYSTERY	3
II. THE SHADOW ON THE BLIND	21
III. A MARK ON THE ARM	35
IV. THE TWO LOOPS	51
V. AN INTRUDER	69
VI. A CHALLENGE	85
VII. THE TEST	99
VIII. JANE PERKINS	117
IX. THE CONCAVE MIRROR	145
X. THE TRAP	165.
XI. FANENNA'S STORY	191
XII. WHAT THE TRAP CAUGHT	213
XIII. THE SCENT	227
XIV. WHAT MALLODY SAW	257
XV. THE LURE	277
XVI. THE LETTER	295



ILLUSTRATIONS

BY E. C. CASWELL

“ ‘ I know where she’s going,’ he said ” .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Facing Page</i>
“ The doctor leaned his elbows on the table and pointed a long forefinger at me ”	10
“ For just an instant I saw her etched in profile as she poised upon the sill ”	79
“ ‘ Good God!’ cried Ashton	218

THE GREEN CLOAK

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY

DOCTOR McALISTER has often told me that I take life seriously because I am young. That may or may not be the reason, but I am convinced that I know the reason why he takes it so light-heartedly. It is not because he is old, but because he has already won from life all the reward he wants. In his own department of science—applied psychology—he has achieved about as high a place as it is possible for a man to reach. In this field his reputation does not have to lower its colors to any other in the world; and if in his periods of relaxation he chooses to be frivolous, no one can afford frivolity any better than he. I suppose that the very idea of frivolity used

in connection with Professor Ronald McAlister's name would make most people laugh by the grotesque unfitness of it; and the people who know him only as a gaunt, gray old bachelor, with a rugged, homely, deeply-lined Scotch face and a big rough voice, would be right to laugh.

But I am more an adopted son of his than a mere assistant, and after spending the daily number of hours in his laboratory, watching him work his miracles, I see his great mind relax, and find that he is just a boy, more of a boy than ever I was in my life.

He likes the daily papers—the yellower they are, the better; and he devours a perfectly incredible number of detective stories, good and bad. His delight over a good one is almost pathetic.

So when I read the headlines in the morning papers that day, I knew perfectly well that when work was over and we met at our special little table in a corner of the brilliant dining-room of "The Meredith," I should be regaled with a thrilling and enthusiastic account of the Oak Ridge murder.

It was easy indeed to prefigure the whole scene. Similar ones had been enacted so many times before. I didn't altogether relish the prospect, for I hate to see people smiling and nodding behind my old chief's back, people who, intellectually or socially, or in any other way, aren't fit to tie his shoes. He doesn't mind their smiles, and the light-headed emptiness of their lives has a mysterious sort of attraction for him. I suppose that is why we live at "The Meredith," that great, gay, extravagant, foolishly luxurious apartment hotel, where anybody who is rich enough can find an asylum from the oppressive responsibilities of having a home of his own.

Of course Doctor McAlister is rich enough to live where he chooses. He spends more than his salary every year on small, secret, unknown benefactions among the students at the university. And he does his work for the love of it. Perhaps it is natural, after all, that when that work is over he should like the glow of amber-shaded lamps, the moth-wing sheen of beautiful frocks, the sight of

lovely faces and white shoulders and the suggestion of subtle, strange perfumes.

And I can't blame these frivolous people, who smile so easily, for smiling at the professor. His figure, in the first place, is so uncompromisingly Scotch that any suit of clothes that he has worn a week looks as if it had been made in Scotland, too. His dress coats are his tailors chief despair. The old gentleman has only to hunch forward his shoulders and stretch his arms out of the sleeves two or three times, and one would not believe that the coat had ever been made for him at all.

So, when I see him across our little table, his twinkling grey eyes glowing with excitement, his long ungainly arms and expressive hands working away in enthusiastic gesticulation, his big voice booming out the story of some sensational crime, I can't really wonder that a good many people nod and wink and giggle.

The thing I did wonder at some times was, that Wilkins, the obsequious, omnipresent, invaluable head-waiter, contrived to preserve

his respectful mask of professional imperturbability. I wondered if the owners of the hotel at all realized how much Wilkins was worth to them, and if they did, whether they paid it. His manner I believed to be infallible. A close observer could tell the relative social importance of every person in that dining-room by the way Wilkins treated him. Of course there was no actual discourtesy, even toward the meanest; but there were vast social distances indicated between the severe professional reserve which he uses toward the vulgar, the self-conscious and the poor, and the genial deference he bestowed upon the three or four social stars of the first magnitude whom "The Meredith" boasted among its patrons.

I had a sneaking fondness for Wilkins, based upon the fact that he at least did not underrate Doctor McAlister. I think there was no one in the hotel to whose comfort he was more attentive, or beside whose chair he so often paused as my chief's.

Tonight, for instance, it was Wilkins himself whom I saw conducting him down the

long lane of tables, to the corner of the room where we always sat. The doctor was late tonight, as he nearly always was, and I thought I detected the reason, in the bundle of pink and green late extras of the evening papers which he had thrust—and he fondly believed, concealed—into the tail pocket of his coat.

“Tell our man what to bring us, Wilkins,” he said, waving away the menu which that irreproachable functionary offered him. “You know what we want to eat, better than we do.”

Then he turned to me, “Well, have you read about it?”

“The Oak Ridge murder?” I asked smiling. “No, I’ve waited to get the account of it from you. Why should I bother with columns of flamboyant journalese, eighty per cent. fiction and twenty per cent. inaccurate fact, when I knew that I could get at dinner a consecutive, intelligent, boiled-down account of the whole affair from you?”

“You really haven’t read a word of it?” he asked.

“Not a word. I know that Oak Ridge is one of our more remote and less fashionable suburbs, and that there has been a murder there within the past forty-eight hours. Beyond that, my ignorance is complete.”

“Youth! Youth!” cried the doctor in mock dismay. “What is it coming to? Fancy being under thirty and waiting all day for such a story as that, rather than read an account of it in bad English. Well, you shall have the story now from the beginning.—Wait a bit, though. Wilkins—”

The head-waiter looked up from a low-voiced discussion of the menu with the man who had special charge of our table. “Yes, sir.”

“Has Ashton come in yet?”

“Not yet, sir, but he should be here before long. He’s seldom later than this, sir.”

“Serve for three at this table, then,” said the doctor, “and when Ashton comes in, ask him to dine with us”; then, turning to me, “There are some points which the newspapers don’t cover that he’ll be likely to know about.”

Ashton, I may say, was a rising young assistant in the district attorney's office, and I will add that he worked at the detection and prosecution of crime, *con amore*; it was not upon his salary that he lived at "The Meredith."

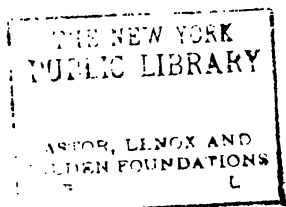
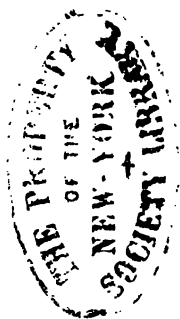
The doctor leaned his elbows on the table and pointed a long finger at me. "Now, in the first place, all we know of Henry Morgan begins three years ago."

"Was Henry Morgan the name of the man who was murdered?" I asked.

"Yes—yes, at least it's the name he went by during the last three years of his life, which he spent at Oak Ridge. He got off the train there one morning with a hand bag and a check for a small steamer trunk, both well-worn and both unmarked with any initial. He went straight to the real estate office of one James McCloskey and said he wanted to rent a house. He was an elderly man, plainly, though not poorly, dressed, and with a quiet speech and manner. From local gossip about him, it was apparent that his only



"The doctor leaned his elbows on the table and pointed a *long forefinger* at me."



salient characteristic was an air of somewhat excessive respectability.

“McCloskey took him house-hunting, and, much to that gentleman’s surprise, the only place in town that took Morgan’s fancy was a large, dilapidated old house in one of its remoter quarters. The old place was in a state of considerable disrepair, and it contained a lot of rattle-trap furniture which the owners had never moved away. McCloskey had confessed that he had never expected to find a tenant for it. The question of repairs didn’t seem to interest Mr. Morgan much, a patch or two in the roof and new lights of glass in the broken windows comprising all he asked for.

“When McCloskey asked him what family he had and when he expected them to arrive, Mr. Morgan answered that he had no family and intended to live alone. He did, in fact, live alone, without even the service of a house-keeper, for a number of months, but finally engaged a respectable old woman, who lived in straightened circumstances not very far

away, to come every day and cook his meals and keep his house in order. He let her in every morning in time to get breakfast, and she went away every night about seven o'clock, after washing up the supper dishes.

"There, you have, practically, the story of his life in Oak Ridge, up to two nights ago. Two nights ago the old woman got supper for him for the last time, and went home as usual about seven o'clock. Half an hour later some passers-by saw him striding up and down his rickety old veranda, smoking a pipe. Yesterday morning when his house-keeper knocked at the kitchen door, there was no answer. Then she went around to the front of the house and rang the bell, also without result. She walked back a little way up the lawn and saw that one of the windows in a sort of study he had on the third floor was open. Moreover, she saw that the gas was still burning in the room.

"Well, it seems that she told various people about her fears that all was not well with her employer, but you know what a town of that description is like. There aren't any

police. Most of the men in the place commute to town on the early trains, and with one thing and another, it was ten o'clock, or so, before the house was forcibly broken open.

"The investigators found nothing disturbed either on the first floor or on the second, but in the old gentleman's study, a finished-off room in the attic, with a couple of dormer windows, they found him dead in his chair. He was leaning back in a queer, unnatural attitude, and when they looked more closely, they found that he had been strangled with a catgut string from an old violin of his. An A string," he went on, with rising voice and finger that gesticulated only about six inches from my nose—"an A string that had been deliberately removed from the fiddle and slipped in a noose around his neck, while he sat there in his chair, and drawn taut. What do you say to that, eh?"

"I don't see why they call it murder," said I. "Why isn't suicide the more likely explanation?"

"Oh, wise young judge," he mocked. "For just this reason, my boy; that the end of the

string wasn't fastened to anything. He couldn't have committed suicide in that way, unless he could reach around after he was dead and untie the knot behind the back of his neck. No, it's murder, and I should be inclined to say a singularly pure example of it."

"There's no connection whatever with his past?" I inquired. "Didn't McCloskey ask for any references at the time Morgan rented the house?"

"He says he did on that first day, and Mr. Morgan assured him that there would be no difficulty on that score; he would present his references in a day or two. As a matter of fact, he never did, but as he paid a quarter's rent in advance, and as he signed an indeterminate lease of a house which the agent never expected to get off his hands, McCloskey didn't like to press the matter. He used furniture that he found in the house, and never brought in any effects of his own, beyond what came with him on the first day, in his hand bag and his little trunk. He never got any letters from out of town, and appar-

ently never sent off any. What his business was, if he had any, no one ever knew. He made occasional, irregular trips to the city, but had no office there; had no telephone in his house."

"He must have been a good deal of a mystery to Oak Ridge," I commented. "Dozens of village gossips must have been gnawing away at his secret for all these years."

"One would think so," my chief assented. "Curiously enough, though, that seems not to have been the case. What mystery there was about the man was of a purely negative sort. There was nothing actively secretive about him. He went about town freely enough; made plenty of casual acquaintances; went to church, and some times, though rarely, had some of the men of the neighborhood drop in for a game of cards. It wasn't until yesterday, when people began trying to get together what they knew about him, that they found they knew nothing whatever."

"You say that nothing on the first or on the second floor had been disturbed. That would dispose of the theory of robbery."

“The whole appearance of the house and its condition would contradict the theory of any ordinary robbery,” the doctor said. No one would break into that dilapidated old structure for such a purpose, unless he had knowledge of some secret and unusual sort of treasure there. But to my mind, the manner of killing disposes even of that alternative. The house is situated in a lonely spot, remote from all other habitation. If a robber had found himself in a position where he was obliged to kill, he could have risked a pistol shot, and he couldn’t have garroted his victim without taking him unawares. No, I believe it to be a case of murder, pure and simple—murder committed for its own sake and not the by-product of some other result. And these cases, you know, are rather rare.—”

“Here comes Mr. Ashton now, sir,” said Wilkins from where he stood not far away. “I’ll have dinner served at once, sir.”

Both the doctor and I like Ashton and he often dines with us, even when there is no particular excuse, such as was offered by the Oak Ridge murder, for doing so.

He is a burly, confident, quick-tempered, generous-minded young chap, of about thirty, and if he keeps on as he has begun, he will some day acquire a reputation as one of the greatest prosecutors in the country.

He was not in evening dress tonight, and he dropped into his chair at our table with the air of one who has put in a trying day.

"Confound these suburban trains," he said. "I just spent the better part of an hour in one coming in from Oak Ridge."

"Ha!" cried the doctor, with an air of the most intense satisfaction. "Then you're just the man I want to see. Did you turn up anything at the afternoon session of the inquest? The account in the evening papers leaves off at noon."

Ashton laughed. "You'll not get a word out of me about that murder, until after the fish. If you attempt to, I shall call on Wilkins here for help.—However," he added seriously, "I do want to talk about this case with you, for I think it not unlikely that you may be able to help us."

THE SHADOW ON THE BLIND

CHAPTER II

THE SHADOW ON THE BLIND

NO one could deny my old chief a sense of humor, but his possession of it did not always prevent him from taking literally a remark intended to be jocular. He waited in perfect silence until Ashton laid down his fish fork and took his first sip of claret. Then he pounced upon him like a cat.

"So you want my help, do you? Well, I'm glad of that. I'm glad that at last there's a district attorney's office in this country advanced enough to use applied psychology in the detection of crime. I'm at your service absolutely. Phelps, here, and I will do all we can for you. But you must tell us all about the case first."

Ashton laughed. "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but the fact is that when I spoke of wanting your help, I was not thinking of you as a

psychologist, but as a New Zealander." Then, noticing the disappointment in the doctor's face, he went on, "I don't mean the slightest disparagement of the accuracy of your deductions or the truth of your discoveries, but, after all, the duty of the district attorney's office is to prosecute the guilty to a successful conviction, and the only people who can convict are the twelve men in the jury box. I'm afraid we should find it hard to impanel a jury who wouldn't regard your instruments and your measurements, and your schemes of association as so much hocus-pocus."

Doctor McAlister frowned. I could see that the explanation had not gone very far toward mollifying him.

"Well," he asked, "what has my being a New Zealander to do with it?"

"Why," said Ashton, "we found some bundles of old newspapers and various other odds-and-ends which seemed to point to Morgan having lived at one time in Wellington, and knowing that you had spent all the early years of your life in those parts, it occurred to me that you might have some connection

there which would assist us in tracing him."

"Of course," growled the doctor, "I'll do anything I can for you."

Partly to appease him and partly because the subject was running strongly in his own mind, Ashton talked about little else than the Oak Ridge mystery during all the while we sat at dinner. Many of the things he told us were matters that the doctor had already learned from the newspapers. But there were two new developments that were distinctly interesting.

"The papers will make a great sensation tomorrow morning," he said, "of the testimony at the inquest of a young man named Harvey. I wish we might have got hold of him before that fool of a coroner did. His testimony sounded like a choice selection of pages from the 'Old Sleuth,' and I am inclined to think that it has just about as much relation to fact. I left Mallory—he's one of the detectives in our office—out in Oak Ridge to keep an eye on him. He's to bring him down to the office in the morning. Until I have questioned him pretty thoroughly, I

sha'n't know whether to believe a word of his tale, or not. Mallory seems half inclined to think that the boy has some active connection with the crime, but that I disbelieve utterly."

"Tell us about him," said the doctor.

"Why, he's a young fellow well known there in town. His parents are eminently pious and respectable, but Willie enjoys the reputation of being a little fast. He's one of these imitation college boys, very well pleased with himself and quite a lady-killer, I judge, from the snickers that went round the room when he testified that he had gone out to call on a young lady and had not found her at home. His clothes are the sort of caricatures on the fashions that one sees in magazine advertisements; he had the corner of a light blue silk handkerchief sticking out of his pocket.

"I am telling you all that because it throws something of a light on his testimony. He swore that as he passed the house about nine o'clock, he noticed a light in the upper windows. The shades were down, he said, and in silhouette on one of them he could see old

Morgan leaning back in a chair in an unnatural attitude, and with something queer-looking around his throat. That would be interesting enough, and may be true, but hear what he piles onto it. He says he saw the shadow of another figure on the shade, the figure of a woman, who was leaning over Morgan and making strange gestures in the air."

"Well," said the doctor, "may not that be true, too?"

"He might have made us think so if he had stopped there," said Ashton, "but his subsequent testimony made it perfectly clear that he was lying. He told the coroner that after watching that lighted window shade for a few moments, he had walked away and gone straight home, and that was all he knew about it. Then the coroner questioned him more closely as to the appearance of the woman. Mallory and I nearly laughed outright at the absurdity of his reply. He described her very fully. He said she was young, pretty, dark, and that she wore a green cloak with a high turned-up collar; and yet, mind you,

he had just testified that he had only seen her in silhouette upon a window shade.

“That thick-witted deputy coroner seemed to find nothing extraordinary in this description, and did not ask him how he could distinguish black hair from blond, or a green cloak from a yellow by its shadow. And not one of his precious jurors inquired about it, either. So his testimony went entirely unchallenged. Of course I could have spoken up, but I was only too glad to let the thing go until tomorrow morning, when I shall have the young man to myself.”

Doctor McAlister's eyes were twinkling. “So you regard his testimony about the woman as a pure fabrication, eh?” he inquired. “Mallory evidently agrees with you, only he thinks that the boy lied because he had some personal connection with the murder, and you don't. What's your own opinion of his motive?”

“Vanity,” said Ashton. “Plain, puerile vanity. He found he was making a sensation, and he made it as good as he could. He knew that we were all at sea for any

possible clue to the identity of the murderer, so he sprang his mysterious beauty with the black hair and the green cloak for the purpose of making us sit up."

I could see by the wrinkles about the doctor's eyes that his good humor was returning. "So it's perfectly clear to you, is it," he asked, "that this young man, according to his lights, wasn't telling the exact truth?"

Ashton stared at him. "What's this? Psychology again? Yes, it's perfectly clear to me."

"You rail at the coroner and his jury," said the doctor, "you people who walk in darkness and might see a great light and won't. Haven't you any category in your mind at all between truth and lies? Don't you allow for any margin of illusion?"

"Illusion!" Ashton snorted. "Do you really believe that a man could testify as Harvey did, in perfectly good faith? Do you believe a sane man's mind could play him a trick like that?"

"You're a sane man," said the doctor, "and yet I'd be willing to wager that I could

take you over to my laboratory and make your mind play you tricks as strange as that, and stranger."

"We'll make a trial of that some day," said Ashton easily, "and Phelps here shall hold the stakes. I'm not at all sure that when I'm harnessed up in some of the black art apparatus of your laboratory you won't be able to do the trick. But this young man wasn't in your laboratory. He hadn't a chronograph attached to his eyelid nor a sphygmograph bound to his wrist. He was just an idle, everyday young man, rubbering, as they still say out in Oak Ridge, at a lighted window. What was there to give him illusions?"

"Association," said Doctor McAlister bluntly. "The profile he saw in silhouette was associated, in his mind, with some woman with black hair, and the high-collared cloak connected itself in his mind with some cloak of the same shape that he had previously seen, which happened to be green in color. Consequently, he thought of the woman whose shadow he saw upon the shade as a black-

haired woman with a green cloak. You don't deserve this explanation, because you are a scoffing unbeliever who ought to know better, but you may have it, just the same, for whatever you may think it worth."

It was clear to me that Ashton had been impressed with the reasonableness of Doctor McAlister's explanations, and yet he was unwilling to admit to himself that the impression had been made. Before he could think of any comment that would be sufficiently noncommittal, Doctor McAlister changed the subject.

"You've searched the house pretty thoroughly, I suppose," he said. "Have you found anything besides that vaguely suggested connection with New Zealand that places your man at all?"

"Nothing," said Ashton. "I've never seen a case that was so utterly barren of clues. The very lack of them is suggestive in the highest degree. No man would have sponged out his past so carefully, unless there were something in it that he meant should never be found out."

"Have you any indication how he passed the time? What sort of books he read, if he read at all, or what he did to amuse himself?"

"He had one queer hobby," said Ashton, "and that was geography. He had literally hundreds of maps, large scale maps of the whole of the southern Pacific. What he did with them, or how he found any interest in them, is beyond my power to guess."

I saw my chief's eyes light up at that, and waited, with a good deal of interest, for what he meant to say to this rather unpromising looking clue. But just then we were interrupted.

Wilkins came up and bent over his chair. "Doctor Reinhardt has telephoned to you, sir," he said. "Shall I put an instrument on the table?"

"Thank you, Wilkins. Yes, I'll talk with Doctor Reinhardt right here."

A moment later a portable telephone was set down beside the doctor's coffee cup. Ashton and I tried as people will, futilely and as they always do, to keep up a conversation

of our own, and not listen to the half of one which the doctor was carrying on over the instrument.

When he had hung up the receiver, and motioned to a waiter to take the telephone away, he turned to me,

“Reinhardt says he’s got a queer case out at St. Martin’s. He wants me to come out, posthaste, and have a look at it. You’ll go with me, won’t you? From what he says, it may prove interesting.”

I nodded assent, and we both rose from the table.

“You’ll excuse us, won’t you?” said Doctor McAlister to Ashton. “Look me up in the morning and I’ll give you those addresses.”

Ashton rose, too. “I suppose you wouldn’t care to take me over to the hospital with you?” he hazarded.

My chief looked a little surprised, and, perhaps, for an instantaneous moment, he hesitated; but then he said heartily, “Why, we’d be glad to have you come. Reinhardt won’t object, I’m sure, only I’m afraid you may

find us rather dull company when we get going on our hobbies."

"I'll go with you as far as the hospital, anyway," Ashton said. "I'd like your company, and, if possible, I'd like to get this confounded murder out of my head for an hour or two. And if you find you don't want a layman about when it comes to examining the patient, why I can wait outside."

Wilkins had signalled an elevator for us, and waited beside the door to bow us out. Just as Doctor McAlister was about to step into the elevator, he turned and spoke to him,

"Will you tell the office to order a taxicab, Wilkins?"

"It's already ordered, sir," said the man. "I took the liberty of sending for it when I heard you say you'd go out. It will be waiting as soon as you are ready for it."

The doctor laughed. "You're a good man, Wilkins," he said; "and you're something of a psychologist yourself."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," he answered imperturbably. And as the doors closed and we shot upward toward our apartments, we heard him add, "Good night, sir."

A MARK ON THE ARM

CHAPTER III

A MARK ON THE ARM

IT had occurred to me when Ashton expressed his wish to forget the Oak Ridge murder for an hour or two, that he was choosing his company badly in offering to go out to the hospital with us, but I soon found I was mistaken. My chief seemed as little anxious as his guest to discuss the subject that was in all our minds. But it was the late Henry Morgan who provided us with a topic of conversation after all. The suggestion that he might have lived in New Zealand set the doctor off in reminiscence about his own early days spent in that part of the world.

“That was a great country for a boy to spent his childhood in,” he said presently, “at least in the days when I was a youngster. That was during the gold rush, you know. They were finding it everywhere. And a wild

lot of men they were. And if we had gold hunters ashore, we had pirates, and famous ones, too, afloat. All the material of boyish romance was right at hand; we were steeped in it. As I say, they were famous pirates,—about the last of their breed, I guess, that there is room for in the world. Why, I myself saw Bully Franklin once.”

“Was he a pirate?” Ashton inquired politely, but with no great interest.

“Was he a pirate! Well, what does fame amount to? He was a pirate that a British cruiser once spent a whole year looking for, tramping up and down the Pacific on the wildest goose chase that ever a cruiser led. Yes, he had some of the elements of a great man; he certainly was a very successful one.”

I was rather glad to get the doctor to talking of something besides the murder, so I pressed along on this topic. “I suppose he got what was coming to him, at last,” I remarked.

“Well, I don’t know; not poetic justice, certainly. Nothing like what his crimes called for. He was killed as the result of a love

affair of his. That was queer, too, because he already had two white wives, who lived together, I believe, very amicably. But he made love to a Maori girl that one of his men was interested in, and it's said the fellow bashed his head with a tiller one night as he was coming aboard, up over the side. His crew went all to pieces after that. The authorities got hold of most of them and hanged them in short order.—A good deal of a man," he repeated after a little pause. "A fat little fellow,—baldheaded when I saw him. He had a pleasant smile, and was very fond of pets."

"How did you happen to see him?" I asked. "I should think a pirate would be rather a difficult man to come to close quarters with."

"Let's see," he answered reflectively. "It was when we were living at Hokitiki. My father was manager of a branch of the Union Bank there. Franklin put into the harbor and came ashore. I was only a lad then, and a good deal disappointed that he hadn't a long black mustache and a pair of pistols in his belt. He probably had the pistols

somewhere, but they didn't show, and he was mild looking enough."

Then he turned suddenly to Ashton. "How old a man did you say this Morgan was?"

"A man apparently about sixty."

"Well, if he was out in that part of the world when I was, he was old enough to have had a rather lively time."

Our carriage pulled up at the door to the hospital just then, and we found Doctor Reinhardt waiting for us in the office.

"I don't know whether it is a case that will interest you, or not," he said, "but it's rather curious. She was picked up for drunk, half frozen, out of the gutter by a patrolman. He rang up the wagon and they took her to the police station, but the desk sergeant disagreed with the diagnosis, and sent her here. He's playing it safe since a week ago Sunday, when he let a case of a fractured skull stay in the cells all night. Gilbert was on duty when they brought her in, about two o'clock this morning, and he thought it was concussion of the brain. For

myself, I don't believe it. I'd say, to look at her, that she's normally asleep, except that we can't wake her."

"A young woman?" Doctor McAlister asked.

"It's a bit hard to tell her age," said Doctor Reinhardt,—“oh, yes, young, certainly. She's queer looking; pretty, in a sort of outlandish way. When I last looked at her she was mumbling the queerest gibberish you ever heard. I've got a nodding acquaintance with most of the languages that come in here, but I never heard anything that sounded at all like this."

"Come along," said Doctor McAlister; "I'd like to take a look at her."

Doctor Reinhardt made no objection to Ashton's accompanying us, so together we followed him into the long white ward. The girl we found lying upon the narrow cot, beside which we stopped, justified his description of her. She was not at all a beauty, according to our standards, but the thought came to me that in some far-off corner of the world where standards were different, she

might have been accounted so, possibly in a supreme degree.

Her skin was very dark, a brownish-olive, her hair blue-black, very abundant and wavy, and the surrounding white of pillow-case, sheet and night-dress set off the richness and depth of her coloring to the greatest advantage.

Where the quality in her face lay that gave it that strange, weird, unearthly look, even now in quiet slumber, I could not decide. The features were bold, rather than fine; the brows and lashes very heavy, and the nose broad at the base, the lips full and rather wide, though not protruding, the cheek-bones high and prominent.

But this analysis left me no wiser than before; it failed utterly to account for that strange *different* look her face wore. There was no negro blood in her veins, even in a remote stage of dilution. That fact was as obvious as it was that she was not a caucasian.

"There will be no trouble about identifying her," Doctor Reinhardt remarked, and I agreed with him, thinking that he referred

to the strange quality of distinction I had noted about her face. But it was evident, the next moment, that he had some more definite mark in mind, for he took up one of the passive hands that lay upon the coverlid and started to strip back the sleeve of her night-dress. But the movement was arrested by an imperative gesture from Doctor McAlister.

Looking up at him, for the first time since we had stopped beside the girl's bed, I saw that his eyes were shining with an unaccountable excitement. He bent down over the pillow, his ear not six inches away from the half-parted lips. Then we saw that the lips were moving, and, in the suddenly enforced silence, caught the sound of a queer, droning chant. It only lasted a minute. Then, with the sudden, lazy motion of one deep asleep, she turned on her side, cuddled her cheek on her palm, and the chant died out in a sigh.

Doctor McAlister straightened up suddenly, walked away three or four paces, then wheeled and came back. Ashton and I watched him curiously.

“You started to show me her arm,” he said to Doctor Reinhardt. “Is there a mark there?”

With a nod, he pulled up the sleeve and showed us, high up on the forearm, a queer little bit of tattooing in red and blue. “I know something about tattooing,” he said, “but that mark and the way it’s executed puzzle me as much as her language does.”

Doctor McAlister merely nodded. He had understood the language; I would almost have taken my oath to that, from the expression his face wore as he bent over her, listening. I wondered if he understood the mark, too. I think that Ashton’s thoughts were running parallel to mine.

“You say you’ve been trying to wake her, and haven’t succeeded?”

“Yes, and I confess I’m puzzled, because there’s nothing trancelike about her pulse or her respiration.”

Doctor McAlister made an examination on his own account, but it was very swift, and I should have called it perfunctory, yet it was clear enough that this queer patient had,

only a moment before, excited his keenest interest. But he did one thing which I think must have surprised Doctor Reinhardt as much as it did Ashton and me. He turned back the bed clothes and examined, rather minutely, the girl's feet.

"Well, I'm much obliged to you for bringing me out for a look at her," he said to Doctor Reinhardt, as he straightened up and prepared to leave the ward. "She's been that way, you say, ever since she was brought in?"

"Yes."

"She's in a hypnotic or subjective condition of some sort. I'd be very glad if you'd keep me informed, over the 'phone, concerning her condition. If there's any radical change, I'd like to come out and see her again.

"If you don't mind my suggesting it, I believe it would be a good thing to take her out of the ward and put her in a private room where she could be under constant supervision. If she says anything, in any intelligible language, it might be well to make a note of it."

With that and a brief word of good night, he strode away, and Ashton and I followed him, he looking completely mystified, and I feeling scarcely less so. We drove back to "The Meredith" with hardly a word, but as we crossed the lobby on our way to the elevators, Doctor McAlister paused.

"Ashton," he said, "I can't quarrel with your opinion that my methods of making deductions and discoveries would prove of small service to a district attorney, and, of course, I will be glad to help you in the other way all I can,—I mean in the matter of tracing Morgan's New Zealand connections. But I'm going to ask a favor of you. Give Phelps and me here a chance to make a little investigation of this case on our own account."

"Anything you like," said Ashton heartily. "Go out to Oak Ridge and hunt about all you like. I'll even turn my impressionable Mr. Harvey over to you after I've finished with him tomorrow morning, though I can't guarantee there'll be much left of him."

We went up in the elevator together, and

my chief, with a nod, indicated that he wanted me to come to his sitting-room.

When the door was closed behind us, he filled his pipe and began striding, slowly, up and down the room. But he stopped before me at last, and with a preliminary "Humph," and a grasp of a muscular hand upon my shoulder he said,

"I suppose some people would call that a coincidence."

I vaguely guessed what he meant.

"Some connection, you mean, between the woman Will Harvey testified he saw and the one we saw lying there in the hospital?"

"Morgan lived in New Zealand, didn't he? And Ashton says he had maps, vast numbers of maps of the southern Pacific—large scale maps of the groups of islands that are scattered all through it. It's fair to suppose, then, that he had some reason for interest in those far-off South Sea Islands."

"The girl!" I exclaimed. "The girl in the hospital!—Do you mean that she comes from that part of the world? From one of those islands in the South Seas?"

"The mark on her arm is enough to prove that," he answered.

He paused there, but I knew that was not all.

"That queer mumbled song of hers?" I hazarded.

He took another turn across the room before he answered that question. "Yes, I understood it," he said at last. "That song, as you call it, was an old Maori death chant."

For an instant I just sat there, staring at him with fascinated, horrified eyes. The knowledge of the meaning of that strange droning chant came like a flash of lurid light, revealing, but not illuminating, a vast abyss of mystery.

Doctor McAlister had resumed his thoughtful patrol of the room. "Of course," he said half under his breath, "it may be a coincidence, just that and nothing more."

"No," said I rather hoarsely, for I found my throat was dry. "No, I can't believe that. There must be some stronger connection than mere chance, between the murdered body of that man in the house out at Oak

Ridge and the death chant of that girl at whose bedside we stood tonight. It must be more than chance."

But my chief turned upon me sharply. "Don't make the mistake of thinking that," he said. "There is no greater source of error in the world than the belief that unlikely things can't happen. They happen every day, coincidences, against which the chances are a thousand to one.—Still," he paused in his stride and ploughed his hands through his thick gray hair,—“still, to put it conservatively, it's vastly more likely than not that there is a connection; that this girl has some place in that unknown past of his, which he thought he had sponged out so completely."

"Well," said I, "if she has any place at all, isn't it altogether likely that she is the person who committed the murder? And if that's so,—well, what are we going to do about it? Tell Ashton?"

He wheeled round at that and smote a nearby door panel with his great fist. "No, by thunder, no! Not that. Not, at least, until

we've solved this mystery for ourselves; until we are sure we understand it. And I mean by that," he went on, looking at me fixedly, "I mean a good deal more than merely proving she was the woman whom Will Harvey swore he saw in silhouette upon the shade; until we've proved more than that it was her hands that pulled taut the catgut string around the old man's neck."

"What more than that," I asked unsteadily, "can you hope to prove, or want to prove?"

"This," he said, stopping before me and looking straight into my face; "this. That it was her will which directed the hands, and not her soul that was responsible for the crime."

"You mean," I gasped, with sudden half-perception of his meaning, "that there may be another will concerned in the business?"

"Exactly that," he answered. "I mean that, judging from that girl's condition to-night, it may very well be that the real murderer of that old man was no nearer to the house in Oak Ridge the night the murder was committed than we are now."

THE TWO LOOPS

CHAPTER IV

THE TWO LOOPS

THE next day Doctor McAlister and I each packed a hand bag with enough to keep us going for two or three days, and about noon set out for Oak Ridge. The weather had been fine and rather mild for November, but shortly after our return from the hospital the night before, the wind had whipped round into the north. By morning it had developed into a lusty gale, which drove the fine stinging rain and sleet slantwise, down from a leaden sky. By the time we were ready to start, the rain was already turning to snow.

I am afraid I shall have to confess that I was not very keen about setting out upon this expedition. In the first place I am methodically inclined, and it takes a good deal to draw me away from the class-room and the labora-

tory; indeed, I have not yet won the right to take liberties with the established scheme of things as Doctor McAlister does. And then, besides, I am not half the boy that the old professor is, and the notion of going out to a deserted and dilapidated house, in a remote suburb, and playing detective for two or three days in a murder case didn't at all appeal to me as it did to him.

The latter of these considerations I could not plead, but I could and did make some slight demur on the ground of the former-half-completed experiments in the laboratory and two or three classes that I was scheduled to meet.

"You needn't worry about your classes," laughed the doctor; "they won't worry about you. And as for the laboratory, why, there's a far more interesting one just now out in the Morgan house at Oak Ridge. If it will ease your conscience any, I'll order you to come."

So I gave in without further protest, and we set out together. The journey itself was not the sort calculated to arouse enthusiasm.

Our train rumbled along for miles through the shabby outskirts of the city, which looked all the more desolate and grimy as we saw them out of our car windows through veils of smoke-soiled snow; and the vacant spaces into which we presently emerged—the no-man's-land, which is neither town nor country—looked wasted and inexpressibly dreary, and as if the very spirit of desolation brooded over it.

We rode together in the half-filled smoking car, and hardly exchanged a word, until after we had pulled out from a tiny suburban station and the brakeman, opening the door amid a hail of cinders, had cried out, "Oak Ridge next." Then Doctor McAlister, who sat facing me, leaned forward.

"Our friend Ashton has a considerable power of vivid description," he said. "Unless I'm altogether mistaken, the young man who is sitting three seats behind you, on the other side of the aisle, is the witness of whom he told us yesterday. I felt tolerably sure of it when my eye first lighted on him. He's going to get off at Oak Ridge, and I think

that settles it. One small town could hardly boast another like him."

"How do you know he's going to get off at Oak Ridge?" I asked.

"He straightened up a little in his seat and began to readjust his necktie when the brakeman called the name of the town."

When I had made a pretext for changing over and sitting with the doctor, I quite agreed with his identification. There, to the life, was the young man whom Ashton had described to us. I thought I could see traces upon him of the grilling to which Ashton must have subjected him this morning. His eyes were sullen, his color unstable and his hands fidgety. Altogether, in his ridiculously cut clothes, his loud tie, his hat cocked a little to one side, he was not a prepossessing object. I was half-inclined to think there might be something in the theory of Mallory, the detective, after all.

Evidently Doctor McAlister had no share in this idea, for he lost interest in the young man the moment he was satisfied his identification of him had been correct. When the

train stopped at Oak Ridge and we followed William Harvey out of the car, the doctor did not cast a single glance after his retreating figure.

By rare good fortune we found a hack pulled up beside the station platform waiting for the train, a flapping, dilapidated, mud-stained, ramshackle affair, with a horse and driver to match. The man cast a look of rather jaded curiosity over us when we told him where we wanted to go. He had probably driven many people to the Morgan house during the past two days.

After a moment or two of canny bargaining on the doctor's part, we found ourselves jolting along over a frozen, rutty road toward our destination.

"There's the house," said the driver at last, pointing with his whip. "But you're pretty late for the funeral, if that's what you've come for. It must be about over by this time."

Neither of us had thought of the funeral, and the sight of a hearse and a single carriage, waiting there in the wind-swept road,

gave us, with our errand, a rather disagreeable sense of incongruity. That feeling was heightened when, leaving our bags in the hall, we were shown by the undertaker into a large, dim front parlor.

Here we saw death in its most conventional form. A little group of people sitting in rows in little folding chairs, a minister reading the service, a quartette from the village choir ready to sing another hymn when he should have done.

I remembered now the aspect of the case which I had recently so completely forgotten. The man had had his place, slight as it was, in the life of this town; had gone to church; had, in a way, been pleasantly acquainted with all these people, who sat here now so grave and so decorously. And as this impression grew stronger every moment, the other side of the case, the mystery of it, the hinted life—a wild life, perhaps—among those mysterious islands of the southern seas,—the strange, unearthly face of the girl in the hospital whom we had heard mumbling that old death chant,—it all became unreal,

incredible. Our errand in this house became a rashly ill-considered impertinence.

That feeling reached its climax when, at the end of the service, the customary opportunity was offered for a last look at the body which lay there in its black casket. My companion rose and, nodding to me to follow him, took his place in the little procession that was filing round the coffin.

I could not do it; that act, somehow, seemed to put the crowning touch upon our intrusion.

"Oh, I know how you felt about it," said my chief when the service was over, the people gone and we were left alone in the old house,—alone, that is, with the addition of Mallory. "I'm glad I haven't to go through it again, though I'm glad I did, even at some violence to what they call our better instincts. I wouldn't have missed my look into that face for a good deal."

"You didn't recognize!" I cried. "He isn't anyone you knew, long ago, out there in New Zealand!"

"Not individually," said the doctor with a

smile at my sudden excitement, at the sudden recession of those "better instincts" of mine. "Not individually, though that I might have was well within the possibilities. But he belongs to a type that I knew all too well. Did it ever occur to you to wonder why it is that full gray beards and spectacles are always regarded as infallible indications of benevolent respectability? But there's a scar beneath that gray beard that was not come by in any peaceful occupation; and even without it, the whole construction of the skull and jaw, the facial angle, the shape of the ears, all proclaim him a rough customer,—the sort of man who might well have a past that he was vainly trying to escape from.—No, upon the whole, I am glad that Ashton left us free to work out this problem without holding us responsible to him for our results."

Our conversation was interrupted there by the appearance of Mallory at the doctor's elbow. During the funeral services he had been busily watching, from an obscure point of observation, the faces of all who attended, on the possibility that a morbid fascination

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for the place would draw back to it the mysterious person who had committed the crime here.

But now he had leisure to attend to us and inquire as to our business. It was rather amusing to watch his face as he read the note from Ashton that the doctor handed him. It was easy to see, from his suppressed smile of contemptuous amusement, that the district attorney had represented us as a couple of harmless cranks, who might safely be permitted to amuse themselves upon the scene of crime as they chose.

"All right," he said, folding up the note and thrusting it into his pocket. "Make yourselves at home. Do you plan to spend the night here?"

"Two or three nights, perhaps," said the doctor. "We want to do a little looking about."

"Well," said Mallory, with jocular sarcasm, "if you find the secret of the old man's past, or meet up with that mysterious woman that one of the witnesses testified about at the inquest, why let me know."

“You mean to spend the night here yourself, don’t you?” I asked.

“Well, part of it, perhaps. I’ve got some looking about to do. But you needn’t mind me. I’ve got a key and can let myself in at any time.”

An hour later, after a bountiful but vilely cooked meal at a little restaurant near the railway station, we returned to the house and began our investigation in earnest.

The first room, of course, to attract our attention was the room where the murder took place, the study on the third floor. It was a large room, irregular in shape, occupying the whole front of the house. One dormer, containing three windows, fronted straight upon the street and lighted the main part of the room. The rest of it was a sort of pentagonal alcove built into the corner of the house to provide it with the tower which architects of that period so generally affected. This alcove was lighted by three windows. The windows in the room all operated on hinges, swinging inward. Across one end of

the room ran a rude set of homemade shelves occupied, perhaps, by two or three hundred nondescript volumes. A very large, much-littered desk stood in the middle of the larger part of the room, while in the alcove was a high deal table of the sort used by draughtsmen. A stool stood before it, and a swivel chair in front of the desk.

In one of the numerous corners of the room was an immense hamper, which seemed to have served the purpose of a waste-paper basket. The detectives had evidently examined the contents of it in their search for a clue to the murdered man's identity, but had not thought the contents worth preserving. There was a litter of small scraps about it, and that was all. A rusty oil stove completed the tale of the furniture.

And then there were his maps. They were curiously disposed for a man who made a habit of geography. There were none of them on the walls, none mounted in portfolios. They lay about the floor in great rolls. The one or two I looked at, after my preliminary

glance about the apartment, were of recent date and bore the stamp of the British Board of Trade.

I was holding one of them out in my hands and pouring over it, wondering, rather idly, what possible interest this group of tiny coral reefs could have had for a man who lived as Henry Morgan had lived, here in this village of Oak Ridge, when a sharp exclamation from Doctor McAlister drew my attention away from it.

He was standing close beside a big green-shaded lamp and bending over something which he had just taken from the top drawer of the desk. I shivered a little when I saw what it was, saw that it was a violin string.

The expression of the doctor's face, as he turned toward me, betrayed both indignation and excitement. "The prosecution of crime still goes on the basis that telling the truth is an easy thing to do; that a man does tell the truth, unless he means to lie. The man who came up here and found the body of Henry Morgan testified that he had been strangled by a noose. They thought it was

true, because strangulation by a noose is the only kind they ever heard of. But look at this."

He held it out to me, and, my repugnance forgotten, I took it in hand. Instead of one knot, the string contained two, one near the end, the other about fifteen inches away. They were tied just alike, and were knots of the fixed-loop variety, very like a bowline.

"If there were only a knot at the end," said the doctor, "the rest of the string could have been drawn through it to form a noose; but, of course, with this second knot of equal size that becomes impossible. The man was strangled, not by a noose at all, but by a tourniquet—a little stick—a lead pencil perhaps—run through the two loops and twisted.

"Look here!" he cried the next moment, with rising excitement. "Here's the rest of the instrument."

He held out for my inspection a long straight-stemmed briar pipe, and I was able to see, just at the base of the bowl, a shiny, circular indentation. The ghastly clearness of the demonstration of the murderer's method

sickened me a little, and I dropped the pipe rather quickly.

My chief was pacing up and down the room, talking to himself. "I never believed in that noose—not really believed in it."

"You are undoubtedly right about it," said I, "but is the discovery important? Does it make any real difference?"

"That depends on the point of view," said he. "To the late Henry Morgan, I suppose it made no difference at all. To an ethnologist, it makes all the difference in the world. The caucasian uses the noose. With him it has been the instrument of execution, of murder and of suicide from time immemorial. But there are other races that never heard of it. The aborigines in my part of the world never did. With them it was always this." He caught up the string as he spoke, and jerked it taut in both hands. "It's the instrument of ceremonial murder. They used to send widows out of the world this way, until the British government put a stop to that etiquette."

Then, and only then, did I realize the im-

portance of the discovery. “And the girl at the hospital?” I questioned. “Would those two loops be familiar to her?”

He nodded gravely.—“I’ll tell you this,” said he, “I’m glad I’m under no obligation to report to Ashton until I’m ready.”

AN INTRUDER





CHAPTER V

AN INTRUDER

THEN he did a characteristic thing. He put the thing back in the drawer where he had found it, closed the drawer, straightened up, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and said, in obviously good faith, "Come, let's begin."

His discovery of a moment before, which would have contented most men for the rest of the evening, was dismissed, forgotten. We would begin to do what we had come here for, begin our independent search among the murdered man's effects for some clue which others might have overlooked.

Rather to my surprise, the doctor made straight for the waste-paper basket, growled a little at the "fools" who had emptied it, and patiently gathered together the few scraps that were left, some clinging in the

interstices of the basket, some littered about the floor outside.

As I bent over to help him, he held out an irregular bit of thick white paper for my inspection. "He was a queer geographer, sure enough," was his comment. "He tore up his maps. This is part of one. There's a fact which might well have struck previous investigators as curious, but apparently did not. If he tore them up, it was because he was through with them. And if he could get through with them so that he could be sure he wouldn't want them any more, it was because they were meant to serve him some single, definite purpose. When they had so served it, or had failed to serve it, then he destroyed them to get them out of the way. That's logical, isn't it?"

"Absolutely, so far as I can see."

Presently he carried another scrap over to the draughting table, scrutinized its bare surface rather minutely, and then offered this second morsel of paper for my inspection.

"Well, that's one thing he did with his

maps. He pinned them down on this table of his with thumb-tacks."

He pulled open a little drawer in the table, took out first some pencils, rulers and compasses, and finally a rectangular contrivance made of wooden rods, with flexible joints at the corners.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked. For a wonder I did, and he did not. That was a situation which arose but rarely.

"It's a pantograph," said I. "It's used for copying on an enlarged or reduced scale. You can set the scale to anything you like."

"That's what it means, then," said the doctor, turning away from the table, with a nod of satisfaction. "He spread his maps out here, and when they weren't on a large enough scale to suit him, he drew them up bigger, and then he tore them up.—No, that won't do. There's some intervening process, He needed those charts on a larger scale than he could get, and he enlarged them until they suited that unknown purpose of his. But of that purpose itself, we've found no trace.

We may never find a trace, but if he's left a clue to it anywhere, I think we may hope to find it."

He strode over to the swivel chair before the desk, seated himself in it and knitted his brows in the abstraction of concentrated thought. For five minutes there was no sound in the room, but the ticking of a clock downstairs.

Finally he turned a little in his chair, and looked up at me.

"There must have been some standard, some test that he tried those coast lines by. When they did not fit it, he destroyed them. That test or standard may have existed solely in his memory. If not, if it was a thing committed to paper, then we can find it. Whatever it was, he must have been in the habit of referring to it constantly. In that case, I have no doubt that it's somewhere in this room."

"The detectives have searched pretty thoroughly in here," I hazarded.

"Thoroughly!" he repeated, with a gesture of impatience. "They don't know how to be

thorough. Wouldn't know how, even if they had known what they were looking for, and they didn't. I don't know exactly, but I'm coming rather close to it, and I'm sure of this. If the thing had any existence outside of his own memory, he kept it here, close at hand, where he could refer to it easily, and, as easily, conceal it."

For a moment or two more he lapsed into silence. Then rose suddenly to his feet.

"Take the lamp," he directed me, "and hold it at the other end of the book-shelves—so. Now raise it so that the light will fall horizontally along the top shelf."

He had stationed himself at the opposite end from where I stood, and he sighted along the projecting edge of the shelf as I raised the lamp to the height he indicated.

"Try the next one," he said, "—so. And now the next. There; that'll do. We've got it, if I'm not mistaken."

He walked over toward my end of the case, and pulled a book out of the third shelf.

"Our thanks are due to the old woman for not being too good a housekeeper," he ob-

served in comment. "The dust on those books is evidence enough that he was not in the habit of reading them. But this one shows a clear track in and out of the shelf. There's no better hiding place for a sheet of paper than a book."

He balanced the book carefully in both hands, and then let it open where it would.

"Well," he said, "I think we've found it," for there between the two yellow pages was a bluish sheet of semi-transparent paper, folded.

He laid down the book and opened up the paper. It was a map, too, and as I looked at it closely, I saw that it was executed on a very large scale. It was a map of a very narrow-necked peninsula. The soundings in the sea all about it were indicated frequently. Over the surface of the land itself were various little numerals, which had their explanation in a legend in the corner. One had only to read a little way down this explanatory column to see with what minute care the map had been drawn, and on how large a scale. Such unimportant objects, from a geogra-

pher's point of view, as a granite boulder or a blasted tree had their position indicated.

No, the purpose of that map-maker had not been purely geographical. So much was clear.

"It's a tracing, you see," Doctor McAlister observed. "He's got the original locked away somewhere, now. But, do you notice, there's nothing on the sheet, anywhere, to indicate in what part of the world this bit of land lies. There's no latitude or longitude indicated. We'll have to get the original to find that."

At that, the explanation of the whole mystery of this wilderness of maps flashed across my mind.

"No," I cried, "he hasn't got latitude or longitude on the original, either! He never knew, to the day of his death, any better than we know now, into what sea that little peninsula juts its head. That's what he spent the last three years of his life hunting for."

Doctor McAlister nodded gravely. "You are quite right," he said; "right beyond a

doubt. There's no knowing what there is to be found on that bit of headland, but whatever it is, he wanted it badly.'

It was natural that we should both fall silent just then, natural, too, that in our excitement over the discovery, our nerves were higher strung than usual. It had grown pretty late. There was a dead stillness within the house. The only sound, save the ticking of the clock, that came to our ears was the occasional moan of a gust of wind through the trees and around the corners of the house. So it was natural that we both started violently when a gust of wind blew open one of the windows, with a bang, and caused our lamp to flicker and then go out.

I laughed nervously, and wiped my forehead with the back of my hand. It was wet. Then I rose, or, rather, started to rise, and spoke at the same time—began to speak, at any rate. What I had in mind to say was, that I would close the window if the doctor would relight the lamp.

But before I had said three words, the compelling grip of his muscular hand thrust me

back into my chair, and my sentence trailed off into a sort of gasp.

So, for a moment, we sat breathless.

"Somebody's getting in," I whispered presently. "It must be Mallory."

"Mallory has a key," he retorted. "Listen—"

No, that was not Mallory. It was not anybody trying to get in, for somebody had already succeeded,—somebody who was already making his way, with swift, almost incredibly stealthy steps, up the stairs from the second floor to the room where we were sitting.

It was not very dark in the room, for the wind had swept the sky clear of clouds. There was a quarter of a moon shining, slantwise, through the windows, and the mantle of new-fallen snow on the ground reflected a good deal of light.

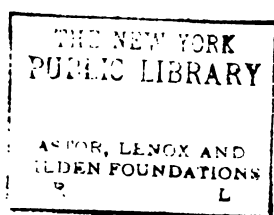
We drew back into an obscure corner and stood close together, half-crouching, eying the door.

Presently we saw it opening. And then there emerged from its shadow a face we both

knew,—a face neither of us is ever likely to forget. The eyes in that face we had never seen before, for they had been closed the last time we looked at it. Now they were about all we could see. The black hair lost itself in the shadow which enveloped the doorway, and the olive-brown skin was itself a shadow. But the eyes—they burned with the flaming green intensity of a leopard's.

The doctor and I shrank back into our corner and waited, breathlessly, to see what she would do. The first thing was curious, and little to be expected. She closed behind her the door by which she had entered. Then, with brisk certainty, but with no noise at all, she moved toward the desk. That brought her a little nearer us.

She had got within arm's reach of the swivel chair, when suddenly, like a flash, all the motion of her body was arrested. Her attitude had something of the frozen alertness that one sees in a setter dog when he points game. We could see her face better now; it was turned squarely toward us. But, apparently, she did not see us. That was natural,





“For just an instant I saw her etched in profile as she
poised upon the sill.”

for we were deep in the shadow. But she knew we were there. The next moment I perceived that she knew by virtue of the same sense that the setter uses. She had caught our scent. Her head went back a little, her nostrils dilated, and she seemed to be drawing in a deep breath.

I have no command of English to describe the suddenness and unexpectedness of the thing that happened then. She stood there before us, as I have said, like one frozen, so still was she. And then, with no preliminary motion whatever, no crouch, no visible gathering up of the forces for a spring, she flashed across the room toward the open window, like a dancing shadow. For just an instant I saw her etched in profile as she poised upon the sill. And then she was gone.

I had followed her to the window as swiftly as my clumsy, human motions would permit, and looked down, expecting to see her lying bruised and broken on the frozen ground. Instead of that, I saw the fleeting shadow of her moving swiftly across the snowy lawn toward the gate.

A moment later, bare-headed, bare-handed, I was running at top speed down the rough, frozen country road in the direction I had seen her take.

Before I had gone fifty yards, I heard other footsteps pounding along behind me, and a momentary fear that my old chief had been reckless enough to risk his bones in such a chase, caused me to pause and turn back. It was not Doctor McAlister, however, but the detective, Mallory, and as he panted up alongside me, he said:

"I saw her coming down the rain-pipe. She might almost as well have fallen, she came down so fast. What was she like? I don't suppose you got anything of a look at her, though."

"No," said I. "The wind had just blown out the lamp, and we were there in the dark when she came in."

"It doesn't matter," he said briefly, as we ploughed along, side by side. "I'll know what she's like well enough when I come up with her."

“Do you think you will come up with her?”

“Sure to.” Then he added, “But there’s no use in your keeping up the chase. I’ll get her alone, never fear. Nothing that wears skirts can outrun me.”

I was already half inclined to take his advice and turn back, for the pace was beginning to tell on me, when I tripped over something and fell headlong. I had been running out at the side of the road to avoid the deeply frozen ruts, and I went straight on, into the ditch at the roadside.

Mallory never broke his stride. “Go back,” he shouted over his shoulder. “I sha’n’t need help.”

By the time I had picked myself up and shaken some of the loose snow out of my sleeves, he was already a hundred yards ahead down the road. I was about spent, so, regretfully, I turned back.

But for one moment I paused curiously to investigate the cause of my fall. It had been something soft, something that gave a little as my foot struck it, and then clung. It had

been entirely covered by the snow, which had fallen out here in the country to a depth of nearly six inches.

I scuffled around in it with my feet until I found it. Then I stooped and picked it up. It must be a shawl or a blanket, I thought, as I shook the snow out of its folds and held it out in both hands. No, it was neither. It was a cloak; a green cloak, and the collar was cut high in the back.

I cast a glance over my shoulder. Mallory was already out of sight in the distance. I threw the cloak over my arm and trudged back to the house.

A CHALLENGE

CHAPTER VI

A CHALLENGE

EARLY the next morning Doctor McAlister and I took one of the trains upon which the male population of Oak Ridge habitually goes to town upon its several and various business. We had, by no means, exhausted the possibilities of discovery which still lay concealed, we felt sure, within that lonely old house where we had passed so strange a night; nor had we solved its mystery. But matters of a more instant importance compelled us, for a while, to abandon it. Our momentary glimpse of that strange, weird face, the face we had formerly seen in the hospital,—there in the room where the murder had been committed, the girl's flight and her complete disappearance, together with the finding of the green cloak—all of this compelled a change in our line of action.

In the first place, we knew that, little as we liked the prospect, it was our clear duty to report to Ashton what we knew of the mysterious, wild creature who had escaped from the hospital and was now at large. By one means or another, she must be found as quickly as possible. She had already destroyed one life—of that we were practically sure—and until she was safely under restraint again, we could have no guaranty that she would not destroy others. To thwart that possibility, we must call in Ashton and the police, however little to our liking such a course might be.

We deferred our breakfast until our arrival in town, memories of the dinner we had had the night before making it easy to go hungry for a while. We were later getting in than we expected to be, for a combination of fog and freezing sleet delayed our train. Out of the car windows we could see, as we crawled along, that the telegraph wires were already sagging under their white armor of ice. As soon as we got in, we drove straight to "The Meredith."

In the restaurant we found Ashton himself, just sitting down to breakfast. He welcomed us with an eagerness, which showed that he had already heard some report of our adventure of the night before.

"I was on the point of telephoning for you," he said, "but you've saved the precious hour or two by coming on your own account."

The infallible and omnipresent Wilkins was already placing two extra chairs at Ashton's table, and we dropped into them gratefully, and called for our coffee. But Ashton was not minded to grant us any respite.

"Mallory reported to me here at six o'clock this morning," he began, "having come all the way from Oak Ridge on foot, and without getting the slightest trace of the mysterious woman who invaded the Morgan House last night. I confess that her appearance throws a different light on Harvey's testimony. And I think you'll agree that, in all probability, she is the criminal."

"I've no doubt myself," said Doctor McAlister, "that it was her hands that strangled old Morgan."

“Well, then, she’s the criminal, isn’t she?” said Ashton; and regarding the answer to this question as too obvious to be waited for, he went straight on. “The whole energies of the police and of all the detective force connected with our office will be bent toward finding her. What I want from you—from both of you, independently—is the most complete and careful description you can give of the physical appearance of the woman who entered Henry Morgan’s study last night.”

“You can describe her for yourself,” said Doctor McAlister rather shortly. “You have a talent that way.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’ve seen her. You’ve enjoyed a good look at her. She’s the girl that Reinhardt sent for us to see at St. Michael’s two nights ago.”

Ashton stared in clear amazement, first at the doctor and then at me.

“You’re sure?” he gasped.

“Perfectly,” said I gravely.

For a moment he sat silent. Then he frowned.

“May I ask whether you had any suspicion, when we saw her there at the hospital, that she might prove to have some connection with this case?”

“Yes,” said my chief bluntly; “it’s your right to ask. I did suspect a connection between her and the Oak Ridge mystery. I recognized and understood the language in which she was chattering to herself. It’s a language that, with minor variations, is spoken in all those islands in the South Pacific. The thing she was singing to herself was a death chant.”

Ashton looked pretty grave at that. “I won’t presume,” he said, “to question your motive for your reticence with me the other night. Undoubtedly it seemed justifiable to you, but, as a result of it, a dangerous criminal is now at large. I admit it was not a result you could have foreseen, for I remember your recommendation that she be closely watched, and I have no doubt that with the clue you’ve just given me it won’t be many hours before we find her. A strange creature like that, half-wild, chattering a language

that no one can understand, cannot remain hidden very long.—I can't understand, though," he went on, "the reason you gentlemen have for wishing to withhold from me your full confidence. You haven't given it to me yet. You've discovered something more that bears upon this case which I haven't heard of."

"We have," said the doctor, "and it was with the purpose of telling you about it that we came back to town this morning—that was part of our purpose, at any rate. Do you remember the green cloak which you so confidently declared to be nothing but a bit of fiction, born of Will Harvey's puerile vanity? Well, we've found that. A green cloak, with a high collar, just as Harvey described it."

Ashton eagerly demanded the details as to where and how the cloak was found, and these I supplied him with.

Then there was a little silence. His displeasure over our previous reticence was suddenly swallowed up in his interest in the revelations we made to him.

"That's one to Mallory, certainly," he said

at last. "He was right and I was wrong."

"How do you make that out?" I questioned.

"Didn't I tell you that Mallory suspected Harvey of some active connection with the crime, and thought that he was lying to shield himself? The discovery of the cloak makes it evident that he was right. He knew who the actual criminal was, knows now, and was undoubtedly associated with her. He probably thought to save himself by giving us the clue that would lead to her detection. In his eagerness, he overreached himself and told too much, told more than he could possibly have seen, if his testimony as to how he saw it were true."

He broke off there with a short laugh. "But confess," he said, turning to my chief, "confess that this discovery of Phelps' puts your theory of associative illusion completely out of court. Harvey testified to a black-haired woman in a green cloak, and denies that he saw more of her than her silhouette upon the shade. We know now that a black-haired woman in a green cloak was actually

there, from which it follows that Harvey lied, knew that he lied—lied, as Horace Greeley used to say, ‘with the naked attempt to deceive.’ And to have lied thus about a matter which he knew to be vital and significant, he must have had some powerful, and probably guilty, motive. I don’t believe that you can get away from the logic of that.”

“Your conclusion is probable,” said my chief, “but it’s not inevitable.”

I was rather sorry he said that. Of course, from a strictly academic point of view, he was right. It was possible that, by a coincidence, Harvey might have associated a silhouette of the face and of the cloak with the very person who had committed the crime, and still be totally unsuspecting that that person had any connection with it; might be unaware of the association which his own mind formed. But I had to admit to myself that that line of reasoning would sound better in a college class-room than in a district attorney’s office.

Ashton himself dismissed the denial with a mere tolerant shrug, and set it down to the obstinacy of old age.

"I'm glad it's come out that way," he said, "for more reasons than one. That pretty theory of yours shook me, I'm free to confess, and when I failed yesterday morning to break down Harvey's assertion that he had meant to tell the truth from first to last, I was inclined to think that you might be right. But—" An expressive gesture with both hands completed the sentence. There wasn't much more to say.

"You brought the cloak to town with you, I suppose," Ashton went on presently.

I nodded. "You'll want it, I presume?"

"Yes," he said. "It may prove a valuable bit of bait, not for the girl herself, of course, but possibly for one of her accomplices. I'll have Harvey arrested at once. Surveillance isn't good enough for him now; I want him in jail."

"You promised me a chance at Harvey after you got through with him. Do you remember?" said the doctor. "I hope you don't mean to withdraw it."

Ashton stared at him. "You still think you can beat up anything in that covert?"

he asked incredulously. "Oh, well, I've no objection to your trying. I'll have him arrested at once and brought to town. Where do you want him? At your laboratory?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "When may we expect him? This afternoon, some time?"

"Yes," said Ashton. "Not later than four o'clock."

The doctor swallowed the last of his coffee, pushed back his chair, and rose to his great ungainly height.

"Now, let's have an understanding," said he. "I've given you, freely, all the information you've asked for. It comprises pretty much all the information you have which can be of any service to you in the solution of the mystery of this crime. That, of course, is partly due to luck. But from now on we'll work separately. I believe that I can solve that mystery by my methods. I believe that with your methods you will fail. Phelps and I are going to set about trying to find that girl for ourselves, in our own way. If we find her, we will examine her in our own way; and

we sha'n't tell you anything about it until our investigation is complete."

His words were unequivocal and were spoken with a good deal of determination, but there was nothing hostile about his manner, and when he concluded, he held out his hand in a friendly way to the district attorney.

Ashton smiled, but did not hold out his hand in return.

"Of course you know," said he, "that you are proposing something that, under my oath of office, I can't permit. If you find that girl—I don't think it very likely that you will, but if you do, I shall be obliged to take her away from you and put her in safe keeping. And the methods I'll use to determine her guilt or innocence will be my methods, and not yours."

The doctor laughed. "That's understood," he said. "You're welcome to take her wherever you can find her, in my laboratory, or anywhere else. But if you don't find her—"

"That's thin ice, Doctor McAlister," Ash-

ton interrupted earnestly. "If you proceed with that express determination of yours, I may find it necessary, little as I'd like to, to have you watched, as persons suspected of compounding a felony."

"All right," said the doctor. "That's understood. Watch away all you like. But you'll still let me have a chance at Harvey?"

Ashton shrugged his shoulders with a vexation that was half-genuine, half-simulated. "You don't deserve it," he said, "but I've made a promise and I'll stick to it."

THE TEST



CHAPTER VII

THE TEST

FULLY expected that after the grilling he had received at the hands of the district attorney, Harvey would prove recalcitrant and reluctant subject for the tests we wished to try upon him. He was nervous, it is true, and it took a good deal of assuring of the most tactful sort, on Doctor Alister's part, to get him quieted down to anything like a normal state of mind; but he was perfectly willing. Some one had told him—one of the detectives, I suppose—that he was to be taken to the laboratory to have his mind examined, and just at the first I think he was apprehensive that something out of the process would be painful, would involve, perhaps, some sort of surgery. His first sight of the queer, mysterious-looking instruments which our big room con-

tained did nothing to counteract that fear. To the eye of ignorance it must look like a torture chamber from the Inquisition, brought down to date.

My chief spent the better part of an hour taking the young man around and explaining the different instruments to him, allowing him to guess weights and distances, testing him for color blindness, and showing him various aural and optical delusions. He introduced him to the chronograph as a means of testing his reaction time for colors and for sounds.

The instruments in a psychological laboratory would be fascinating toys, even if they had no scientific value, and it was not long before young Harvey began to show an inclination to test himself by every electrical and mechanical piece of apparatus in the laboratory. He had forgotten the Oak Ridge mystery, forgotten Ashton, forgotten his recent arrest, forgotten, even, the detective who was waiting in the corridor outside.

He was ready at last for our real experiment. Nothing about Doctor McAlister's

manner suggested that there was any difference, from our point of view, between the amusing things we had been doing and the test which he now proposed.

"I'm going to see how quickly you can think," he said. "You're to sit down in this chair, and Mr. Phelps here will read you a list of words. The instant he reads a word, you are to say, aloud, the word it makes you think of—say it just as quickly as you can. You've shown an unusually quick reaction time so far, but this is a better test than any of them. We hang up a pair of little telephones, so,—one in front of you and one in front of Mr. Phelps. The moment he speaks a word it makes a little mark on that revolving cylinder. The moment you speak, a second mark is made. The cylinder turns round all the while, and the distance between the two marks shows how quickly or how slowly you think."

I ran my eye down the list which my chief had prepared, with a good deal of care, while we were waiting for them to bring Harvey to the laboratory. The first twelve words were

what we call neutral, that is, they had no connection, so far as we knew, with the crime, the mystery or the inquest. In telling us his association with them, which he would probably do freely enough, our subject would establish his normal speed in this sort of mental operation.

But the thirteenth word was *Loops* and the fourteenth was *Pipe*. The associations he should announce with those two words and the time he should take in pronouncing them would go far toward establishing a conviction in the doctor's mind and in mine as to whether Harvey had guilty knowledge of the means which had been employed for the old man's murder. If he had such guilty knowledge, if he had seen that ghastly tourniquet made, and twisted it taut himself, or had witnessed the operation, those two simple little words would almost infallibly recall it. The words that would flash into his mind might be violin, perhaps, or throat, or even, possibly, the plain black word, murder.

If some such word as that, some damaging, suggestive word, should flash into his mind,

one of two things would happen. He would either say it aloud, or he would stop himself from saying it, and deliberately think up another word which, to our ears, could have no sinister significance. But that latter course of action would betray him as certainly as the other, for thought takes time, and the fact that he had been obliged to stop to think would be remorselessly and exactly shown in the chronograph.

With a feeling of excitement which I found it hard to conceal, I began reading those first twelve neutral words. His answers came with flashlike rapidity. He was a good subject, and he had entered fully into the spirit of the test. To my ear the interval between my word and his was about half a second. When I saw the record afterwards, I found that it averaged a little less than that—about four-tenths.

The word *Pen* brought the obvious association, *Ink*. *Snow* called up *Shovel*; and *Song*, *Theatre*. The twelfth word, *Sign*, called up the curious association, *Woodland*, which was to prove of interest and significance to us

before the day was out. But I had no time to think about it then.

Without varying the interval, without varying the tone of my voice, or raising my eyes from the list I held in my hand, I pronounced the thirteenth word, *Loops*.

The answer came like a flash, and it was *Automobile*. I glanced up as he said it, and caught a faint smile of reminiscence on his lips. Loops in his mind were things to be looped, and the circus bill-boards supplied the association with automobile. The next word, *Pipe*, brought the simple association, *Tobacco*. To my mind his unhesitating utterance of that word was as good a demonstration of his innocence of the crime itself as a completely established alibi would have been.

But we were only at the beginning of our experiment. Neither the doctor nor I believed him guilty. We both believed that, hidden in some corner of that mind of his, was a piece of unsuspected knowledge which would give us the key with which to unlock the heart of the mystery.

Three or four numbers down the list came another word, *Map*, which might have drawn a significant reply. The instantaneous association which it brought up, however, was *Europe*. After that came a succession of words, straight inventories of articles to be found in various rooms in the Morgan house, but they all drew blank. Never once was there a moment's hesitation.

So far our test proved, clearly and exhaustively, that, in his testimony at the inquest, our young man had meant to tell the truth. I was reminded of the doctor's words on the night of our return from the hospital, when he had warned me against falling into the error of thinking that the unlikely could not happen. His old theory of associative illusion, which had been made to look so fantastically improbable by our discovery of the cloak, was practically proven true in the very teeth of its improbability by this test of ours.

But who was the girl Harvey knew—the black-haired girl who wore a green cloak, with the collar cut high in the back? We

were as far as ever from the answer to that question.

And so far as I could see none of his associates with the successive words in my list brought out anything of significance. Apparently we were drawing blank cover. At the same time, I was aware that something or other had made my chief extremely thoughtful. The way he was opening and shutting his hands and staring out of the window, the perplexed frown which knitted his brows, made it clear that there was only one link lacking in some chain of association of his own.

At last as I glanced at him in the half second interval between my word and Harvey's, I saw that he had got it; saw the sudden flare of excitement kindle in his eyes and his two clenched hands come down softly on the arms of his chair.

The next moment the word *Dance* in my list brought the unexpected association *Policeman* from Harvey.

At that the doctor rose and interrupted the test. "I think, Phelps," he said, "that those

negatives of yours must be done. I'll go on and read this other list to Mr. Harvey."

The errand he had proposed to me was purely fictitious and the sheet of paper he held in his hand was blank; so I interpreted his interruption as intended for the mere purpose of giving him a chance to catechise Harvey along some new line without causing him to suspect the reason for the change.

To give color to the excuse, I left the room for a few moments, but it will be easy to believe that I returned as soon as I plausibly could. I found Doctor McAlister pronouncing a succession of words rather more rapidly than I had read them from my list, and the young man's answers had quickened, too, so that to the ear they were almost instantaneous. The words were a list of the features of the human face. *Ears* was the first one I heard, and its association, instantly, *Coral*; probably a reference to earrings, I thought. *Eyes* produced the adjective *Black*. Lips, ludicrously enough, brought the involuntary admission, *Kiss*. And at that our subject went flaming red. His perturbation

was made perfectly evident the next moment, when he waited four seconds after the word *Hand*, only to produce the rhymed association, *Band*. Nothing could have been clearer than that, being on his guard against making another involuntary admission, he had rejected whatever word had come first, and consciously and laboriously thought up another.

The next word *Face*, brought, as a rather quicker response, the adjective *Nice*. It did not occur to me at the time that this was a rhymed association also; that somebody he knew pronounced it "fice." But that the doctor's mind had jumped to this conclusion was made clear when, for his next word, he himself gave out the word *English*.

This got an answer, but not the kind of answer we were expecting. Our witness jumped to his feet, knocking over the little telephone before him, as he did so. There was a scared look in his eyes, but besides that, he was evidently extremely angry.

"Now look here," he said, "what business is it of yours whether I go around with Jane

Perkins, or not? She's a respectable girl; she's a lady. What right have you got sticking your noses into my affairs?"

For myself, I was too much astonished by the result of the doctor's experiment to say anything. For that matter, my chief might as well have been silent for any effect his words had in calming the subject of our test. He wouldn't sit down. He wouldn't answer questions. He was through with us completely. This he made quite clear as he struggled into his overcoat and clapped on his hat.

His voice, which in his excitement had risen almost to a shout, attracted the attention of Mallory who had been waiting in the corridor outside. The detective now opened the door and looked in with a view to offering us needed assistance.

"I'll keep him quiet for you," he said. "He doesn't leave here until you are through with him. Those are Mr. Ashton's orders."

"Tell Mr. Ashton," said the doctor quietly, "that we're quite through with him, and that

he has given us a very interesting and instructive test."

"Well," said I when we were left alone, "I don't mind admitting that I'm rather behind the procession. We've discovered Jane Perkins, but who she is, or what she is, I don't know. And I certainly can't see what gave you the clue that led you up to her so directly."

"Do you remember his association with the word 'sign'? It was 'Woodland.' "

"Yes," said I. "It struck me as curious."

"It struck me as rather more than that," said the doctor, "because I had an echo of the same association myself, and I spent ten solid minutes trying to place it. I suppose my difficulty came from the fact that it took me so close home."

"Woodland Avenue you mean?" I questioned. That was the street "The Meredith" was on.

"Closer than that," he said. "Do you remember our own corner and the street sign that marks it? It was pulled around diagonally and bent into a most disreputable

angle as a Halloween prank two weeks ago. So the association was a perfectly natural one to anyone who, during the past two weeks, has been in the habit of frequenting our part of the town."

"But," said I, "how did you infer the existence of Jane Perkins from that?"

"Of course, that was only the starting point," he answered. "His whole train of associations made it evident that he had been 'going around,' as he said, with somebody. The place in the social scale occupied by that somebody was pretty well determined by the neighborhood of the street sign. It's quite the smartest part of town for blocks and blocks all around there, and it would be preposterous to assume that Will Harvey calls at the front door of any house thereabouts. The young ladies who use the front doors of the imposing residences in our neighborhood don't go to the sort of dances that would call up the association 'policeman' in any young man's mind. At any rate, it seemed a reasonable inference to me that our young friend had been carrying on a harmless

flirtation with some housemaid. The scene of this affair was so far away from his own home, Jane Perkins was so utterly disassociated in his own mind from anything pertaining to the Oak Ridge mystery, that his naive description of the black hair and the green cloak of the woman whose silhouette he saw upon the shade becomes possible."

"Well," said I thoughtfully, after a little silence, "it's perfectly evident that we've done Harvey a service, although he isn't grateful for it just now. We've cleared him, to our own satisfaction at least. We've found an English housemaid named Jane Perkins. She is, no doubt, the girl of whom the profile on the shade reminded him. The next thing to do is to look her up, discover, if possible, whether she happens to possess a green cloak, with that particular kind of collar. It's likely enough, I suppose. There are probably hundreds of garments like that being worn in the city this season. In the department stores they make what they call 'specials' of those things, and sell them in hundred lots, all exactly alike."

The more I thought over the situation, the deeper my perplexity grew. The test upon Harvey had utterly destroyed my hope that we could get from him any clue to the identity of the strange, wild creature we had seen in the hospital. Instead, it had led us to a trig, snug, undoubtedly respectable English housemaid named Jane Perkins; and leading us to her, it left us face to face with a coincidence, or, rather, a series of coincidences almost incredible. Under an associative illusion Harvey had testified at the coroner's inquest, as to the color of a woman's hair and the color of her cloak, when he had seen neither, except in shadow upon a blind. His association had been, not an unconscious one with the murderess herself, but an equally unconscious one with a totally different person. And yet what he testified to had happened to be true.

"Well," I resumed with a sigh, "there are lots of young women with black hair, and I suppose a good many of them wear green cloaks. But that a girl should have a profile like that of the extraordinary creature we

saw in the hospital and later in Morgan's study,—a profile like that and the same colored hair and the same sort of cloak, and still be obviously a different person altogether, is rather disconcerting. Ashton at least would laugh at us if we told him we believed it."

"Yes," said the doctor, "Ashton would laugh. He laughs rather too easily, that young man."

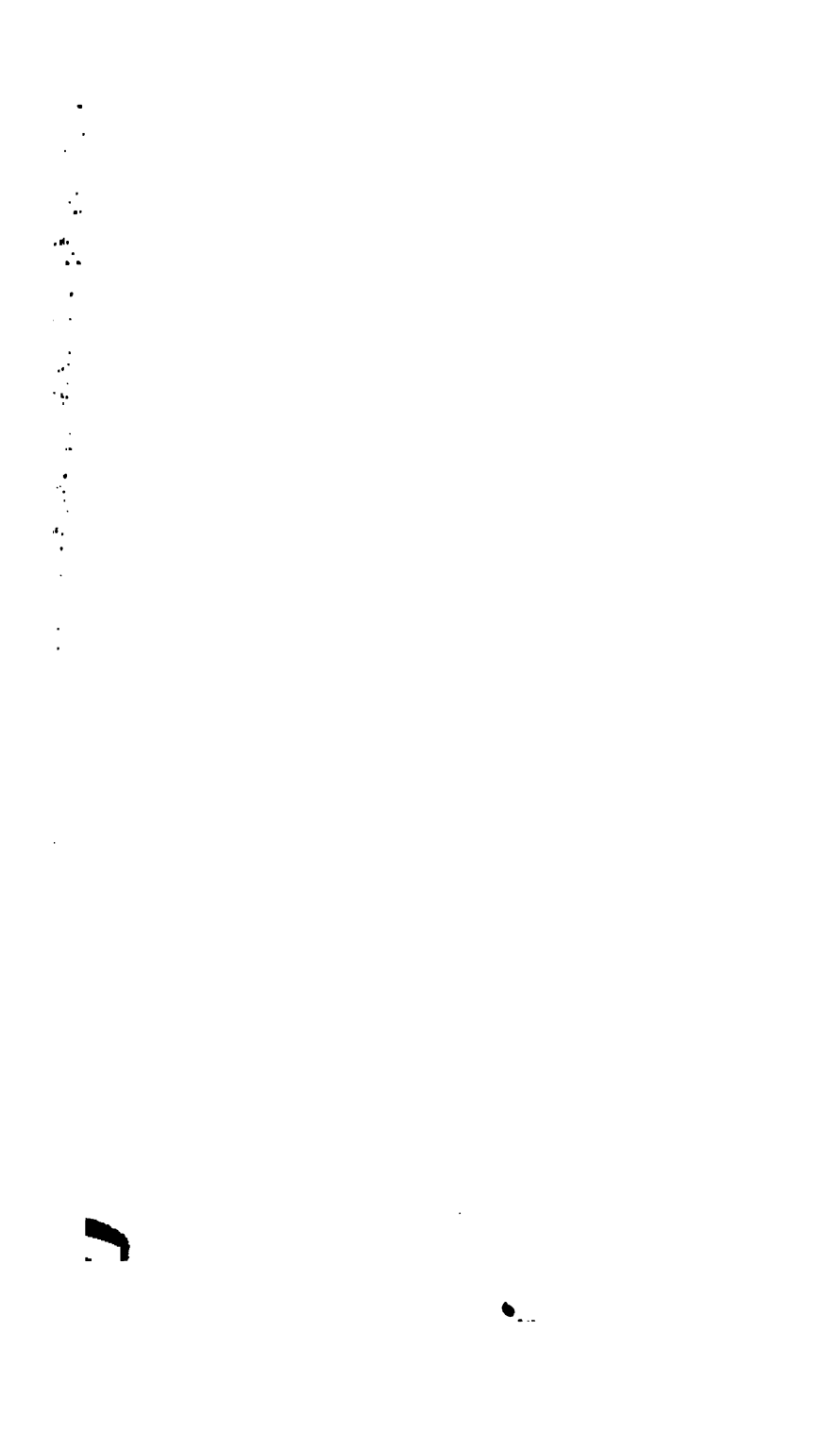
Then, for the first time, I looked long and searchingly into my old chief's face. His eyes were bright with excitement, his cheeks flushed and his big, restless hands beating out a triumphant tattoo upon the table top. He did not look like a man whose plans and theories had gone awry.

"There's something," I said curiously, "that I don't see yet."

"You will soon," he assured me, "before another day is out, unless I'm mistaken. Have a little patience."

There came a sharp knock at the door just then, and as it swung open, we saw Ashton standing there.

JANE PERKINS



CHAPTER VIII

JANE PERKINS

AFTER our conversation with Ashton in the morning, which had terminated with a practical declaration of war, on our part, upon him, his visit to our laboratory took us rather by surprise. I think, perhaps, that he intended us to be, and that there may have been lurking in the bottom of his mind the idea that by coming upon us in that unexpected way, he might surprise some secret we were holding back from him.

He was utterly skeptical about our methods of psychological investigations. The lists of associations with which we had been testing Harvey would have seemed to him just about as worthy of serious consideration as the game of twenty questions with which children are amused.

But he suspected us, and quite rightly, of having found out more during the hours we had spent in the deserted house at Oak Ridge than we had confided to him.

"Well," he said cheerfully in answer to our greeting, "I just met Harvey coming away from here in Mallory's convoy. I suppose with such an array of instruments as this," he waved his hand to include pretty much everything in the room, "you've succeeded in getting the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth out of him. How about it? Is he innocent or guilty?"

His mockery was perfectly good-natured, but the depth of his skepticism made it possible for Doctor McAlister to be perfectly frank with him.

"He is innocent," said he. "He had no more connection with the Oak Ridge murder than you had."

"He says so himself, I presume," observed Ashton.

"Exactly," replied the doctor.

The telephone bell rang just then and I answered it. I heard a voice from somewhere

inquiring if this was Doctor McAlister's laboratory, and on my answering in the affirmative, the voice asked if Mr. Ashton had arrived yet.

"He's here now," said I. "Do you want to talk with him?"

Then I turned away and called Ashton to the 'phone. As he started across the room my chief spoke to him,

"I see an evening paper sticking out of your pocket," said he. "Let me have a look, will you, while you are at the telephone?"

Ashton handed it to him, then crossed the room and picked up the receiver.

The doctor beckoned to me. For the moment he seemed very little concerned with the news, for he turned the front pages rapidly, until he came to the lost and found section in the classified advertising. Once there, his eye pounced, like a hawk, upon the item he wanted. His long bony finger pointed it out to me:

"Found—A green cloak. Owner can have same by identifying and paying the cost of this insertion."

"I wonder if that bait has brought any nibbles this afternoon," the doctor whispered.

Then, before I could reply, he gripped my arm tightly, and nodded toward Ashton.

"A woman, you say" . . . I heard him exclaim with every appearance of excitement. . . .

"Did she identify it?" . . .

"What sort of woman? Anything unusual about her?"

There was a little silence while he listened to the description. Then in an incredulous tone we heard him exclaim,

"An English housemaid! And she gave her name as Jane Perkins! Did she identify the cloak beyond a doubt?"

.

"What address did she give?"

.

"What's that? Three—seven—0 Woodland! Why, you idiot, that's my own address! That's 'The Meredith.' And you let her walk off with that cloak over her arm after she had given you that address!"

He waited for no answer, replaced the re-

ceiver on the hook, with a jerk, and whirled round upon us, his face red with anger.

"Gentlemen, don't you think you have carried this joke a little too far?" he demanded.

I suppose the unwarranted accusation might have made me angry if I had had leisure to indulge in such an emotion. But all my other feelings were swallowed up in astonishment. That one additional detail supplied by Ashton's conversation over the telephone stretched an already hardly credible coincidence to the breaking point. Jane Perkins not only had a green cloak with a high collar, she had lost it; and seeing it advertised as found, had promptly gone and identified it, and had gone away with it over her arm. But the address—well, I admitted to myself, that reduced the whole thing to a farce.

For a moment all my belief in Doctor McAlister's theory, in the validity of the test we had performed upon Harvey, in every scientific law I had felt surest of ten minutes ago, tottered on its foundation. Some one, somewhere, in placid security from our

suspicious, and from the possibility of our detection was directing this ghastly farce and was permitting himself to laugh at us. That girl in the hospital had been shamming; Harvey had been shamming; Jane Perkins, who had identified the cloak, was, perhaps, a myth altogether. I could imagine whoever played the part laughing, as she walked away with that cloak over her arm, and picturing the effect upon all of us when we should learn the address she had given.

But to the district attorney the situation had a very different look. He had no doubt at all—and on second thought I could not blame him—that we ourselves were the centre of a plot to make him look ridiculous.

I got the shock of another surprise when I turned to look at Doctor McAlister. Instead of the indignant rebuke which I expected him to mete out to the young man who had just accused him, he spoke very quietly and with a mocking twinkle in his eye.

“You can’t expect me to pass my opinion on a joke, Ashton, until I hear it,” he said.

“You know altogether too much about it,

already," said the attorney hotly. "This precious Jane Perkins of yours answers my advertisement for the cloak which you turned over to me. She identifies it, beyond any doubt, as any one whom you had instructed in advance would be able to do—identifies it down to a missing button and a patch in the lining. How far back does the joke go? Did you find the cloak as you pretended you did, in Oak Ridge, near the Morgan house, or was the finding of it part of the game?"

A little gesture of rebuke and protest from the doctor checked him very abruptly.

"No, I withdraw that," he said. "That was an unwarranted thing to say. I believe that up to this morning, when you declared war upon me, you dealt fairly with me. I presume you thought that by instructing the woman to give my own detective my own address as hers you were giving me a fair chance to detect the fraud. It would be, I suppose, if this were a game of chess. But this is serious business."

"We realize that as well as you do," I started to say, but my chief interrupted me.

“Can’t you penetrate our fraud a little further?” he asked, and his tone now was openly derisive. “Does it occur to you that Phelps here, with the addition of a skirt and a shawl, might not be a sufficiently plausible Jane Perkins to deceive the astute gentleman you left in charge?”

There was a little pause there, for Ashton was too angry to answer.

The doctor’s manner changed as he went on. “What Phelps says is true. We realize better than you do, I think, what is at stake here. We’re not trying to thwart justice in the long run. We are attacking this problem in our own way, after giving you fair warning. We refused to guarantee that our way would not conflict with yours, and we told you, in so many words, that you’d do well to keep an eye on us. You’ve the law on your side. You’ve all the power of the state attorney’s office, whereas we have no standing at all. If you think we’ve got the cloak, search us; search the laboratory. Where will you begin?”

Still too angry to make any reply, Ashton strode out of the room, not actually slamming the door after him, but shutting it decisively enough to suggest that he felt like slamming it, and the next moment we heard his motor chugging away down the avenue.

The doctor hurried to the window and looked out after him. Presently he turned toward me with a long breath of relief.

"We're all right so far," he said. "He's gone straight on without turning the corner. He isn't going back to 'The Meredith' just yet. Come along. We'll have no time to lose even as it is. Ashton will have cooled down by dinner time, and when he's cool enough to let his mind begin working again, he'll become dangerous."

Already he was struggling into his overcoat. I turned to go to the other room for mine, when he called me back and sent me to the telephone.

"I think we had better have a taxi," he said. "It'll save some precious time and will enable us to take some of our traps up to the hotel with us."

"Traps?" I inquired. "Some of our instruments, do you mean?"

He nodded. "The chronograph and telephones," he said. "I fancy they'll be all we'll need for any real test we shall want to make, but it will be well to take something else for the purpose of diffusing attention. Here, this piece of heavy artillery will just serve the purpose. It's rather cumbersome, but that makes it all the better."

The instrument he indicated was one I had never seen before, it having come in only that day from the model-makers. The doctor was always devising new instruments of one sort or another. This one looked interesting, and I should have questioned him about it had not my mind been so full of other things.

"You'd better telephone at once," he concluded. "If this sleet storm keeps up, the wires are likely to be down before night."

Both of us, I think, would have been a little surprised if we could have known how true that prediction was and how vitally it was going to concern us.

"You are going to make some tests up in our rooms in 'The Meredith'?" I asked.

"I imagine," he said soberly, though his eyes sparkled with excitement as he spoke, "I imagine that our own rooms will be about the only place where we will be secure from interruption. I could see it in Ashton's eye that he meant business, and I'm pretty sure that if we attempted to come back here after dinner and bring anybody with us, our little party would sustain a rude interruption."

All the while he spoke, he was busy gathering things together, and as soon as I had finished telephoning, I helped him. Haste spoke in every movement he made, and it was not long before I was thoroughly infected with his excitement, although I had only a vague idea what it was all about.

Not until we were seated in the cab, with a suit-case full of instruments at our feet, did he say anything that tended to clear up any part of the mystery.

"It was a great piece of luck," he observed then, "we were able to send Ashton away in such a rage. It won't occur to him for some

time, to begin making inquiries about 'The Meredith.' "

"You mean," I exclaimed, "that the address four—seven—0—Woodland Avenue was given in good faith, by a real Jane Perkins, who is actually employed there?"

He only laughed, and told me to wait and see; but the inflection of his voice and the eager expectancy in his eyes made it clear that that was what he did believe.

"But," I protested, "even if it were possible to imagine Jane Perkins as having any possible connection with the crime, it is inconceivable that she would go and risk answering the advertisement in order to reclaim the cloak, and then give her own address."

He vouchsafed no word of explanation or argument, but I could see that my objection had not shaken him in the least. So, perforce, I waited with what patience I could assume to see what should happen when we reached "The Meredith."

The doctor turned over our bag to a hall-boy, with instructions that it be taken to our apartment. Then he led the way straight

toward the dining-room. It was barely six o'clock, a full hour earlier than we usually dined, and the room was almost empty.

"It won't entirely destroy your appetite to sit down to dinner in tweeds, will it?" he asked. "We really haven't time for frivolities of that sort this evening."

And yet his manner when he took the chair that Wilkins placed for him, and glanced over the menu card suddenly became leisurely and deliberate. He had a little chat with Wilkins, taking the advice of that gastronomic expert as seriously as if a good dinner were the only subject that he felt the slightest interest in just then.

The waiter got our order at last and went away with it to the kitchen, and Wilkins himself, with a grave inclination of the head, started to move away, but the doctor called him back.

"I wonder, Wilkins," he said, "whether you can find out for me if there is a chambermaid named Jane Perkins employed here in the hotel."

The man shot a quick look of surprise into

the doctor's face, a look quite at variance with his ordinary stiff immobility.

"Yes, sir, there is such a young woman working here," he said. "It happens that I am acquainted with her personally."

"Ah," said the doctor in a tone of satisfaction, "that simplifies matters. I might have known that you would be able to help me. Wilkins, it happens that I very much wish to have a little conversation with that young woman."

Wilkins inclined his head gravely, without a word.

"You'll arrange it for me, won't you?" said the doctor. "I'd like to have her sent to my room immediately after dinner."

There was a momentary silence after that. Both of us looked up in some surprise that the man did not answer. His face was unusually grave.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said with a little hesitation; "I hope you'll forgive the liberty, but I have, as I was saying, something of a personal interest in that young woman. I hope she's not in any difficulty, sir. I hope

that she has not been doing anything that she shouldn't have done."

"I'm inclined to think not," said the doctor, "but unless I am mistaken, she's in a difficulty."

Wilkins said nothing, but his silence was expectant. He was too well trained to ask any questions, but it was very evident that he wanted to know more.

"I think I may venture to be frank with you, Wilkins," the doctor resumed. "Of course what I say is between ourselves, and I want your promise to say nothing of it to the young woman in question."

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir."

"In the investigation of the Oak Ridge murder the other night a certain green cloak was found, which in the state attorney's office, is believed to have been worn by an unknown woman who committed the crime. That cloak was advertised as found, in the afternoon papers, and was almost immediately claimed and identified beyond a doubt by this Jane Perkins, who gave 'The Meredith' as her address—"

"She didn't do it, sir," Wilkins interrupted quickly. "I'm sure she can't be guilty of the crime of murder. She's a very quiet girl, sir—a good girl."

"I have made a little investigation of that mystery on my own account," said the doctor, "and I'm inclined to think you're right. I should, however, be glad to have some better founded reason for that opinion. There are certain circumstances which point at her directly enough to bring her under serious suspicion and to make her a good deal of trouble. If Mr. Phelps and I can convince ourselves, in advance, of her innocence, we will gladly do all that is within our power, both in representations we will make to Mr. Ashton and otherwise, to shield her."

"That's very good of you, sir," said Wilkins. "I'll see that she's sent up to your room the moment you have finished dinner."

There was another little silence; still Wilkins kept his place beside our table. Presently, after a little apologetic cough, he spoke again.

"It strikes me, sir, that it might, perhaps,

be as well if the young woman were not to know that she was to be questioned. If she is innocent, it would only fluster her, and if she is guilty, it would give her time to prepare herself. If you wish, I will arrange to have her sent to your apartments, instead of the regular chambermaid who works upon that floor, to prepare your bedrooms for the night. In that way, she'll suspect nothing."

The doctor glanced at him shrewdly. "That was a very able suggestion, Wilkins. Thank you for making it."

"Not at all, sir," said Wilkins.

"For the present," the doctor concluded, "you will remember that you are to say nothing of this conversation to anyone, either to the other people in the hotel, or to—Mr. Ashton."

"Certainly not, sir."

The arrival of some other people in the dining-room called him away just then, and we did not see him again until we were half through our meal. Then, looking up, we found him standing, silently, in his old place.

"The matter is arranged, sir," he said to

the doctor. "The young person is at her own dinner just now, but she'll go up to attend to your rooms in about half an hour."

"Very good," said the doctor. "We can have our instruments ready by that time."

At the word "instruments" the man started, and, looking up, I found him regarding the doctor with a queer, half-frightened expression.

"Speaking of instruments, sir," he said, stammering a little, "there isn't going to be any mesmerism, or—"

The doctor interrupted him with a full-voiced laugh, "No hocus-pocus whatever, Wilkins; no black art, no clairvoyance, or anything of that sort. The instruments I speak of simply serve the purpose of a stop-watch, and the test is a perfectly simple, straightforward one."

Then, seeing that the man was still not entirely convinced, he added, "You can be present yourself, if you care to be."

"That's very good of you, sir," said the man. "On the young woman's account I will be glad to come, if you can wait until I can

leave the dining-room. That will be about eight-thirty, sir. I'd be sorry to keep you waiting, but she might be alarmed at any sort of test, and she has a good deal of confidence in me, sir."

"Very good said," said the doctor, "only don't come up to the room with her. Follow along later, on some errand or other, and we'll call you in. Perhaps we'll make a little demonstration on you in advance, just to give her confidence."

A look of decorous amusement appeared on Wilkins' face.

"That will be very interesting, I'm sure, sir," he said. As he bowed himself away I could see that he was still smiling.

"It's curious," I observed to the doctor. "We've seen that man daily since we came here to 'The Meredith' to live, but I got an absolutely new impression of him this evening. It never occurred to me before that when he laid aside his professional manner he might be a thoroughly human, kindly old chap, with as many affections and concerns as any of us, and with, perhaps, about the

same opinion of our reality that we have always had of his."

"We'd better get on," said the doctor suiting the action to the word. "We haven't any time to waste."

As we walked over toward the elevators Wilkins preceded us and rang the bell for us, just as he always did. I had it on my tongue's end to make some reference to our engagement with him for a little later in the evening, not that it was necessary, but simply because it was more natural to say, "In half an hour, then," or something of that sort, than merely to nod and answer his good night. I think he must have perceived that intention, certainly he checked it by looking, just then, a little more wooden and professional than ever. I understood when I glanced over his shoulder and saw that Ashton had just come in. He was not looking our way. Whether he had made a point of not looking, I do not know; but I was glad that I had not blurted out, in his hearing, any reference to the unusual and highly unprofessional sort of en-

gagement that the doctor and I had with Wilkins.

"A rather remarkable man," said I, as we stepped into the elevator.

The doctor nodded.

A few minutes later, in the doctor's spacious sitting-room where we had set up our instruments and now sat waiting for the arrival of the subject we meant to test by them, we heard a rap at the door.

"No timidity about that," observed the doctor in a whisper; "and no effrontery, either. A plain, commonsense, professional knock. Let her in, will you, Phelps?"

It was with a mounting excitement that I crossed the room and laid my hand on the knob, for there, on the other side of this door, was one of the elements of our mystery. What would she prove to be? Another innocent person, tangled by pure chance in the spider's web of circumstance which surrounded our mystery; or would she turn out to be, herself, one of the spinners of the web?

When I opened the door I got, instant-

neously, a very good view of the girl, for the sitting-room was brightly lighted and the little entrance hall-way where she stood comparatively dark. And that first look of mine brought a disappointment, there was no doubt of that. I had not known exactly what I had expected Jane Perkins to be like, but something different from this, certainly. The whole look of her as she stood there, an appearance so pervasive that it baffled analysis, was of stolid, stodgy stupidity.

Her eyes were dull, her cheeks a very dark red, so that as I looked at her first I suspected a perfectly reckless use of cosmetic. Of course the standard I compared her by was the wild girl in the hospital, for, upon the doctor's theory of Harvey's testimony, that wild girl's profile had reminded him forcibly of this English housemaid. There was a crude sort of resemblance between the two faces—the heavy brows and lashes, the black hair and general contour of the features. Indeed, the thing that occurred to me as I stood there was the ridiculous futility of written descriptions of faces, when the

same description would include two people whose general air and appearance were so diametrically different.

I had found it impossible to describe the wildness and curious unearthly distinction of that other face; I found it as difficult to analyze the tameness, the commonplace banality of this one. And yet, seen in silhouette, they might look a good deal alike.

"I was sent up here to do out the bedrooms, sir," she said. "Was there any mistake about it, sir?"

I realized now how "face" and "nice" had suggested a rhyme to Harvey. She pronounced the word, "mistike," in the vilest cockney.

"No, it's quite right," said I. "Come in."

Doctor McAlister let her go straight through into the bedrooms with no more than a glance at her, and a nod in her general direction.

"Well," he said, "how about it? Does the resemblance strike you?"

"I don't think it would have struck me had I not been looking for it. But I imagine if

we could get silhouettes of those two faces and put them side by side, they'd look a good deal alike."

He looked at me rather oddly, turned away and paced the length of the room a couple of times. It was one of his incongruous and unexpected characteristics that he liked to whistle or hum popular tunes to himself when he was thinking in an abstracted way. He began to do it now, though it was no popular tune which his fancy alighted on, indeed, it took me a minute or two to identify the queer, chanting cadence which he hummed over and over again. I did not identify it, in fact, until he left off humming and began to sing, and then the guttural words he used gave me the clue. It was that ghastly death chant we had heard the girl in the hospital droning and mumbling to herself.

Presently he strode over to the mantelpiece. There was a large ornamental, narrow-throated vase at the end of it, and the doctor began tapping idly enough upon the side of it with a little pearl-handled pocket knife. I turned round in some surprise.

"That sounds as if it was full of water," said I.

"It is."

"Well, who, in the world, can ever have thought of putting water in that vase?"

"Who, indeed," he said.—"Oh, look here, will you, Phelps? I've dropped my knife into it."

It was curiously unlike him to do an idle, clumsy thing like that,—quite as unnatural as that that vase, which had never held a flower, should be full of water. But suddenly something in his face told me that the thing he had done was part of a carefully calculated trick.

The next moment he called out, "Perkins—"

"Yes, sir," came the chambermaid's voice from the next room. "Coming, sir."

As she entered the room he turned to her and indicated the vase. "I've just dropped my penknife in there," he said, "and my hand is too big to go in through the throat of it. Do you think you can fish it out for me?"

"My hand isn't as small as some, sir," she

said with fat good humor, "but, any way, I can try."

"Hold on!" the doctor cried as she moved her hand toward the vase. "The thing is full of water. You'll get your sleeve wet."

I was standing close by waiting to see what would happen, still utterly at a loss for a guess as to the doctor's purpose.

The girl slipped back her sleeve and plunged her arm into the vase.

And I, unable to believe what my eyes had seen, clutched the doctor's shoulder and stared, astounded, into his thoughtful face. For high up on the girl's bare forearm, just inside the elbow, was a tattoo mark in red and blue—a mark that I had not forgotten.

THE CONCAVE MIRROR



[illegible]

CHAPTER IX

THE CONCAVE MIRROR

IT was fortunate that she did not once look into my astonished face, because for the first few moments I had no control of it at all, and to any eye, even a stupid one, it would have betrayed strange matters. At first I simply stared at that mysterious little tattoo mark in red and blue; it seemed as if I could not pull my eyes away from it. But at last, rubbing my hands over them, I looked up at the doctor, astounded, questioning, incredulous, and, yet convinced.

Of any such momentary turmoil, his own face showed absolutely no sign. It was calm, almost to the edge of indifference, but his bright old eyes met mine for just an instant with a flashing look that admonished me of the necessity for self-control.

I pulled myself together, turned away for just the space of one deeply indrawn breath, then turned back again for a look at the girl.

She was bending over the vase, her hand plunged down to the bottom of it, where she was fishing about for the doctor's knife. She was evidently a good-humored sort of person, easily pleased. The doctor's pretended mishap and her own efforts to retrieve it, seemed to be providing her with genuine amusement. She smiled and giggled and chattered all the while she was groping around for the knife, and uttered a triumphant exclamation when she found it.

All of that I barely saw, for I was searching, too, searching her face with a concentrated gaze that would have astonished her had she encountered it. As I looked, in the light of my new knowledge of her, the physical identity of her features with those of the wild girl became steadily more apparent, until I was forced to marvel at my previous blindness to it. Physically the face was the same; but everything, except the actual modelling of bone and flesh, every infinitely subtle muscular strain or relaxation about lip, eyelid and brow, everything which makes of the human face a window through which the soul

looks out—all of that was different. Her movements were different. Sensory and motor nerves must be keyed to an altogether different pitch. The deep, stable color in her cheeks told of a pulse that beat at an entirely different rhythm. I remembered the poise of her body the last time we had stood face to face with her there in Henry Morgan's study, her attitude of frozen alertness, the deep breath drawn in through the dilated nostrils. She had caught our scent then and, recognizing it as something strange and perilous, had fled like a shadow.

The doctor was standing close beside her, and now again he began humming the weird cadence of the death chant which I had heard for the first time from the girl's own lips. He hummed it through once in a reminiscent sort of way, and then began singing the words.

The girl looked up at him and burst into a peal of laughter.

He stopped abruptly. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"I beg pawdon, I'm sure," she said. "I

couldn't help laughin'. That was such a funny lot of noises."

"Is my singing as bad as that?" he asked good-naturedly.

"Not the singin', sir; the noises that went with it."

"Oh, you mean the language. Didn't you ever hear that language before?"

"Do you call that a language, sir? Does it mean anything? Do people talk like that?" Then she went on, without a pause, "I beg your pawdon for bein' such a rattle, sir. And here's your knife."

She wiped it on her apron and laid it on the centre-table; then wiped her hand and started to pull down her sleeve.

"That's a curious bit of tattooing on your arm," the doctor commented. "How did you come by it?"

"I don't know," she replied indifferently. "It's always been there, I fancy; ever since I was too small to remember any way.—I hope your knife won't get rusty, sir. And I hope you don't mind my laughin' at that bit of song you sang."

"Not a bit," said the doctor. "I don't wonder the language struck you as queer. Yet it was common enough down in the quarter of the world where I was born."

"And where might that be, sir?" she asked.

"Oh, I meant the South Pacific generally. Where I lived was in New Zealand."

"Fancy now!" she said, obviously surprised and yet no less obviously pleased. "That's where I come from myself. Wellington, New Zealand, but I never heard that language."

"No," he said, "you'd have to go a matter of a thousand miles or two from Wellington to hear that; it's Maori."

"I never heard of him. Is that all, sir? Shall I do out the rooms?"

He nodded; but as she turned to leave the room he called her back.

"You're rather near-sighted, aren't you, Perkins?" he said.

"Oh, no, sir; quite to the contrary, in fact. I can see farther than most people."

"Did you ever have your eyes tested?"

"Measured for glasses, do you mean, sir?"

she asked. "No, sir. I shan't never come to them."

"Sit down in that chair a minute," said the doctor, with an easy assumption of authority. "No, not that one; this big chair here. I want to see if your eyes are as good as you think they are."

The chair he indicated, and in which she rather reluctantly seated herself was deep and soft and heavily upholstered. Neither the doctor nor I enjoyed sitting in it, however, because the curve at the back thrust one's head forward at an unnatural angle.

"Lean back," commented the doctor, "all the way—so."

When she was seated to his satisfaction, he wheeled the chair around with its back to the table, and then adjusted the powerful electric reading lamp so that it shed a beam horizontally above the girl's head.

She surveyed these preparations a little uneasily. "It's like having a tooth pulled," she said.

"Not a bit," said the doctor cheerfully. "It's not going to hurt. I only want you to

look into this little mirror and tell me what you see."

He held it up before her eyes as he spoke. It was circular, slightly concave and was adjusted upon a long ivory handle. He held it above her head so that she had to strain her eyes upward to see it at all, and at such an angle that it reflected the light of the reading-lamp straight into her eyes.

"I don't see anything at all but a spot of yellow light."

"You only see one?" questioned the doctor.

He pulled out his watch and glanced at it. "Don't mind what I'm doing," he admonished her. "Look steadily at the little mirror. Let me know how long it is before you begin to see two of those spots."

He stood perfectly still before her, except that the hand that held the mirror permitted it to swing very slowly, pendulum-wise, before her, though always at an angle that sent the beam straight into her eyes.

From my corner of the room I watched him breathlessly. Of course it was perfectly obvious to see what he was doing. The exami-

nation of her eyes had been a mere pretext. His real object in inducing the girl to strain her eyes upward at that luminous circle was to throw her into a hypnotic sleep. The method he had taken was an old-fashioned one, and one he rarely used. At the laboratory he hypnotized people almost daily by the simple and almost instantaneous process of having them lie down and telling them that they were going to sleep. But that method was absolutely dependent upon a condition which could not exist here. The patient must expect to be hypnotized and be in a state of willing submission. We had no reason to suppose that Jane Perkins would submit herself to any such test as that in the hands of strangers. And even with his mirror he would not be able to hypnotize her if she should suspect that this was what he was trying to do, and should resist. But his confident, friendly manner, his easy assumption of authority, the fact that he came from the same part of the world as herself—all this speedily disarmed suspicion.

At the end of three or four minutes of

silence the doctor turned away and laid his little mirror upon the table.

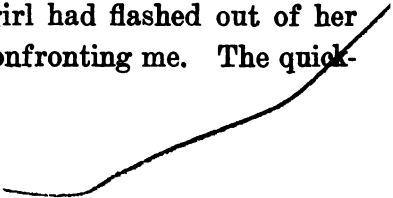
“It’s five minutes past eight,” he said, with a second glance at his watch. “We haven’t any time to lose. Close all the windows; that’s the first thing to do—and lock them. And then we’ll bolt both doors—it won’t do to take any chances—and, in general, try to be ready for anything she may do. I think you’d better stand behind her chair, over yonder, where she won’t see you at first. Now—are you ready?”

He stationed himself where he had stood before, just a pace or two away from the chair where the girl lay asleep. His eyes were shining, and every line of the attitude of his big sinewy body bespoke the relaxation possible only to nervous systems of very high order, the relaxation that is ready to exert its utmost effort in any direction; that is braced against nothing because it is expecting anything.

And then, softly at first but growing louder, he began to hum once more that old Maori death chant.

From my station behind the chair I could see nothing of the girl, except one hand, which hung out over the arm of it. I fixed my eyes on that, and as I stood there I saw it change, saw in it the index of some mysterious, incredible transformation that must be permeating every fibre of her body. It had been Jane Perkins' hand a moment ago—a chambermaid's hand, pudgy, lifeless, inexpressive. Now, indefinably, it was different, altogether different. The fingers stretched apart a little as if they tingled with the warmth and life of a new current, intenser, more electrical. The hand opened wide, then slowly clenched itself into a fist; and last of all it sprang open again, distended to its widest reach, with a galvanic quickness which Jane Perkins' nerves would never have been capable of commanding.

The doctor broke off his song, and there followed, for one dead moment, a silence, which was shattered at the end of it by a strange, weird, half-suppressed outcry. The next instant the girl had flashed out of her chair, and stood confronting me. The quick-



ness of her motion was absolutely indescribable. Her face was now the one we had seen in the hospital and had glimpsed dimly in the dark in Henry Morgan's study.

At sight of me she shrank, crouched, rather, for something about the action suggested that it might be followed by a spring. Her hand flashed to her bosom and explored there for something—a knife probably—that it did not find. What she would have done then, whether she would have flung herself upon me unarmed, I do not know, but the doctor began speaking to her just then, quietly, authoritatively, and in the Maori tongue. He was not trying to soothe her fears, or at least not doing it in any way that is commonly practiced by us western people. He was giving her orders, orders which he was prepared to enforce by brute strength if she should make it necessary. So much was plain from his manner.

Of course I could not understand a word he said. The girl cowered at the voice, but it seemed to reassure her for all of that. The wild light in her eyes died. They be-

came sullen. She squatted on the floor in a corner of the room. Evidently chairs and their uses were as strange to her as her present attitude would have been to Jane Perkins.

Then began one of the strangest scenes I ever witnessed. Except for what I could gather from their faces, and from the inflection of his questions and her sullen, half-defiant answers, it was totally unintelligible to me. Even the inflections told me little, for the language itself is spoken in a queer sort of sing-song, which betrays no family relationship with any other language I ever heard. But in the doctor's face I could read strange matters—excitement, dawning comprehension, and dawning horror, too. It was strangely tantalizing to know that this mystery, the clue to which I had vainly sought, was in process of being unravelled right before my eyes and I was as much in the dark as ever.

Then, as if the doctor had read my thoughts, he spoke to the girl in English:

"Fanenna," he said, "I am talking English. I am going to ask you questions in English, and you will understand me. Did you understand what I said then?"

The girl nodded. And yet I was sure that if I had spoken to her she would not have comprehended a word. It was in its way as strange and perfect a demonstration of the possibilities of hypnotism as I had ever seen. The doctor called in Jane Perkins' memory to act as the girl's interpreter.

"What is the man's name," the doctor asked, "the man who sent you?"

Her answer was two words that sounded like "Osa Enns." I saw that for a moment it puzzled the doctor as much as it did me. But the next moment, evidently, he understood, for his face lighted rather grimly.

"You came away, did you, without the thing he sent you to get?"

She nodded.

"And you hadn't been told to kill the old man? You didn't mean to kill him when you stole into the house?"

She answered with a deep-throated guttural, even to my ears, unmistakably negative.

“Then why did you kill him?”

She flung her head back, her eyes blazed defiance and from her lips poured forth a torrent of speech.

“Stop!” said the doctor. “If you can understand English, you can talk it, too. Speak in the same language I am speaking in, and tell why you killed him.”

“I was sworn to kill him.”

The words came thickly, slowly, clumsily, for tongue and lips were finding difficulty with them, but they were clearly and quite intelligibly English.

I saw the doctor's face light up at the sound of them, for it was the completion of the most interesting experiment he had ever tried. The girl was still submerged, completely, in her wild, primitive, under-self. She was no more Jane Perkins than as if she had occupied another body altogether, and yet, by the strange hypnotic power of suggestion, the doctor was compelling her to use

Jane Perkins' knowledge of English to talk with.

"Who swore you to such an oath?" he asked.

"My mother, when she was dying. It was a vengeance. He had murdered my father. He murdered him before I was born."

"If it happened before you were born," said the doctor quickly, "then, unless you knew beforehand that Henry Morgan was the man you were sworn to murder, how did you know it when you found him in that house?"

Out of the front of her blouse she pulled a little chamois-skin bag which hung about her neck by a fine gold chain.

"By this," she said. "It had belonged to him, the murderer. My mother kept it and gave it to me so that I should know him."

For an instant I did not understand, but immediately after, the way she had detected our presence in that room, by the smell, gave me an inkling.

"Then you can tell people by their odor?" the doctor asked.

"As a dog does," she answered simply.

"He murdered your father, you say, before you were born? Do you know who your father was? What was his name?"

"Flanka," she answered.

For an instant the doctor gazed at her wide-eyed; then, turning away to conceal his excitement, he struck one palm, softly, three or four times with the other fist.

Presently he turned back to the girl. "Did your mother swear you to anything else?"

"No."

"Did she give you anything when she died?"

"No."

"Not even a message? I mean did she tell you anything, anything about Flanka?"

"She told me these words," said the girl, "she said them a great many times, 'Ouan feef, ti oues. Ten sout.'"

That is the best reproduction I can make of the sound of them. I supposed she was speaking in Maori, until, glancing up at the doctor, I saw that he was as much puzzled as I was.

"What's that?" he asked. "Say it again."

She repeated the syllables glibly and without the slightest variation in her inflection of them.

"What does that mean?" he questioned. "That's not your language nor mine."

She shook her head.

"You don't understand it yourself?"

Again she shook her head, and repeated once more the queer, meaningless syllables.

There was a moment of silence, the doctor gazing at her in a puzzled way, all his faculties concentrated upon this fresh mystery.

In the midst of that silence the girl sprang suddenly erect, and from her tense attitude it was evident that she was listening; that she had heard something. To our ears all was still.

"Hearing abnormal, too," murmured the doctor in a swift aside to me.

Then he spoke to the girl. "Fanenna," he said, "you are to go into that other room and wait until I call for you. When I want you, I will call, 'Perkins,' and you will come

out, believing that it is the first time I have called you from the bedroom. You will remember the knife and vase of water, but you will believe that you have dreamed it. And when I call the word 'Perkins,' you will wake up and come in. Go now." He unlocked the door as he spoke.

She obeyed without hesitation. By that time I myself heard footsteps approaching down the corridor.

"Go in there after her, Phelps," said the doctor, "and see that the windows and doors in all the other rooms of the apartment are locked and bolted. Then come back here as quickly as you can."

I heard a tap at the door just as I was finishing the task, and immediately afterward heard the doctor open it. When I returned to the sitting-room, he turned toward me and spoke rather quickly. There was a note of suppressed excitement in his voice.

"Phelps, here's Ashton come to pay us a call."

THE TRAP



CHAPTER X

THE TRAP

WITHOUT waiting for me to comment on the situation, he turned back to the district attorney.

“I thought it not unlikely,” he said, “that, with one intention or another, you would make us a visit this evening.”

His manner was perfectly neutral, neither friendly in the old way, nor hostile as it might have been expected to be after the scene in the laboratory.

Ashton flushed a little. “Oh, I’ve come to apologize,” he said. “My accusation against you and Mr. Phelps this afternoon was quite unwarranted.”

We both spoke at once at that, disclaiming any offense, and the doctor, after a glance at his watch, concluded by asking him to sit down, and offering him a cigar. I very much hoped that both these invitations would be declined, for with that girl in the next room

and Wilkins' knock momentarily expected at the door, it was rather too close quarters to be comfortable. But my chief seemed to be perfectly at ease.

"I'll confess," he began, lighting a cigar of his own, "that I'm a little curious to know what caused your change of heart; what it was that convinced you that Phelps and I aren't engaged in a conspiracy to thwart justice."

"I am afraid I am a self-convicted egoist," said Ashton. "It took an hour or more for the thought to occur to me that there are other people, besides myself, living in 'The Meredith,' and that Jane Perkins might have given that place as her address, without any reference to me whatever, might have given it in perfectly good faith. So when I came home to dinner I made some inquiries, and was cool enough by that time not to be overwhelmed with surprise to find that the address was apparently given in good faith. At any rate, there is a housemaid named Jane Perkins living in this hotel."

The doctor simulated no surprise over this

announcement. He merely nodded calmly, and said,

“You will not have seen her yet, I suppose.”

“So you know about her, too!” exclaimed Ashton. “And you were ahead of me again. Well, that’s not remarkable; you kept your temper and I didn’t. But though I haven’t seen her yet, I don’t believe you have either, because I have been given to understand that it’s her evening out.”

“I suppose,” said the doctor, “that you have taken precautions for apprehending her when she comes back?”

“Yes,” said Ashton; “there’s a man on watch in her room now. She won’t go far. I understand she’s been ill the greater part of the week.”

The doctor smiled and waved his hand toward the telephone. “You may as well tell your man to go home,” he said; “the girl’s here.”

Ashton sprang right out of his chair. “What’s that!” he demanded. “You’ve got her here; hiding her from me?”

"If I were hiding her from you, I shouldn't have told you. No, she's not in hiding at all. She's doing out the bedrooms in this apartment. She'll come when I call her, which I mean to do in a very few minutes. When she comes, I mean to make a little examination of her mind to determine her actual connection with the crime."

"I suppose," said Ashton rather sarcastically, "that you won't mind my asking permission to contribute a few questions of my own to that examination."

"Not at all," said the doctor quite simply. "You may ask her anything you like."

There was a little silence. Then Ashton said impatiently,

"Well, what are you waiting for?"

"I'm expecting another visitor. When I heard your knock, I thought that you were he. It's none other than our friend Wilkins."

Ashton laughed. "Wilkins!" he repeated. "What do you want of him?"

The doctor glanced at his watch.

"I fancy that he's coming now.—Why, Wilkins knows this girl, who is a stupid creature and rather easily alarmed. She'd be almost sure to be panic-stricken at the sight of these instruments. All ignorant persons are the same way."—He paused and shot a derisive smile at Ashton.—"They put them in the category of black-art and hocus-pocus, and regard them with a mixture of contempt and terror. But she has confidence in Wilkins, and by his submitting to be harnessed in the same way we propose to harness her, which he has agreed to do, it will quiet whatever fears she may have."

Ashton looked dubious. Already Wilkins had tapped on the door.

"Stop a bit, Phelps," said my chief as I started toward the door. "Look here, Ashton! Use a little plain commonsense for a minute. You don't half believe yourself that this girl has any guilty connection with the crime. Which way will you find out the most? By making this girl feel that there's nothing to be afraid of; that we're simply investiga-

ting, and not accusing her at all? Or by putting her through an old-fashioned 'third degree'?"

"All right," said Ashton; "have it your own way, only I'll have my way tomorrow."

"There won't be any need of that," said my chief. "The Oak Ridge mystery is going to be solved tonight, and in this room; solved down to the last detail.—Open the door, Phelps."

I imagine that Ashton himself was not more surprised by the doctor's prophecy than I was. To be sure I had penetrated further into the mystery than Ashton had. I had shared with my chief the knowledge of Jane Perkins' strange other-self. I knew that the mysterious, savage creature in fulfilling an oath, which to her must have possessed a religious sanctity, had committed what our more civilized society called a crime. And yet I felt sure that Doctor McAlister meant more than that when he had promised Ashton the whole solution of the mystery. The heart, the essence of the mystery was still unsealed. By some process of reasoning, or intuition, which

I had not followed, my chief held that secret, still unsolved, in the hollow of his hand, and he meant to reveal it to us before the night was out.

I opened the door and told Wilkins to come in. I had an impression that he started a little at the sight of Ashton; and I didn't at all wonder, since I remembered the tacit understanding between ourselves and him, that this examination of the girl was to be for the purpose of shielding her against the district attorney, rather than of betraying her to him.

But I had very little leisure for reflecting on Wilkins' fears or misgivings, because, almost before I had closed the door behind him, I heard the doctor call out, "Perkins."

Well as I understood his experiments, and confident as I was in the success of them, I found it hard to go on breathing steadily while I waited for the response to the call that was to come from that inner room. Would it be Jane Perkins in her own proper person who would appear in the doorway in answer to the call, or would the occupant of

her body prove to be that other, wilder soul!

When she answered, "Coming, sir," I drew in a deep breath of relief, for it was the voice of the girl who used and abused English as her mother-tongue. The next moment she was in the doorway. She was not Fanenna, not the girl who, with green, blazing eyes, had flung that defiant challenge back at the doctor only a few minutes before. And yet, she was not precisely Jane Perkins either, not the stodgy, thick-witted housemaid who had giggled with such unalloyed delight as she fished for the doctor's knife in the vase of water. The girl who stood there now looking at us had thoughtful, troubled eyes. Something—an elusive memory, a nameless emotion, a vague, fluid thing that would not crystallize was perplexing her. She was trying to think, which is something I am willing to wager that Jane Perkins had never done in her life.

Naturally, the first person I looked at when I withdrew my eyes from her was Ashton. He was looking straight into her face, and it was the same face, in a purely physical way,

that he had seen the night he went to the hospital with us. It was not until I saw the look of blank indifference depicted upon his own that the realization was forced upon me that he would not recognize her any better than I had done. From him my gaze flashed round to the doctor, and on the way it took in Wilkins. Both of them were watching her, both, I guessed from their faces, had noted the same indefinable difference that had struck me. It was the doctor who spoke.

"Perkins," he said, "here is Mr. Ashton. He is one of the assistants to the district attorney, and he and I and Mr. Phelps here are interested in trying to find out something about the murder which took place at Oak Ridge a few nights ago."

"Murder!" she cried with a gasp. "I don't know nothin' about any murder, sir."

"No," said the doctor, "I'm quite sure you don't. But we think it possible that you know some things which will help us to find out who the murderer is. Are you willing to help us?"

She hesitated a moment, then turned quite frankly to Wilkins.

"Is it all right, Mr. Wilkins?" she asked. Then quickly turned back to the doctor. "I beg your pawdon, sir, for askin' such a question, but I know Mr. Wilkins, and if he says it's all right—"

"It's all right, Jane," he assured her. "I came up here a purpose so that there'd be nothing for you to worry about."

"All right, sir," she said, turning once more to Doctor McAlister. "I'll be glad to tell you anything I know, I'm sure, though I don't see how what I know can help much, unless—" She frowned and rubbed the back of one hand across her forehead.

"Unless what?"

"Nothin', sir. I seem to be thinkin' of all sorts of curious things, as if my mind was tryin' to wander like."

The doctor laughed. "We're all that way sometimes," he said. "Sit down in this big chair."

She obeyed a little reluctantly. Whether it was a half-memory of it that troubled her,

or merely the instinctive hesitation of one of her class to make herself comfortable in our presence, I did not know.

The doctor busied himself with his instruments. The girl watched him rather nervously.

"I beg pawdon, sir," she said. "Are you goin' to do anything with those? I don't exactly like the looks of 'em, sir; all those queer lookin' machines. Is it anything like goin' to the dentist's?"

"Nothing in the world," laughed the doctor. "These machines don't hurt.—Here, Wilkins, sit down in this chair beside her, and we'll harness you up, too."

He hung up before the girl one of the pair of little telephones that we had used in our association test on Harvey. Then he turned his attention to Wilkins, who had seated himself readily enough in the chair the doctor had designated.

"That's a very impressive looking machine, sir," the man commented. "May I ask what name it's called by?"

"Its name is just as impressive as it is,"

replied the doctor. "It is called a recording phonopneumosphymograph."

Up to that moment Ashton had kept perfectly quiet, but at the sound of that portentous word he burst into a roar of laughter, which Wilkins decorously and respectfully echoed. I laughed frankly myself. What the purpose of the instrument might be, I had no idea, but the prodigious name which the doctor assigned to it struck me as nothing more than a flight of his rather grotesque fancy.

"Well, sir," said Wilkins, "it will have to accomplish a good deal to live up to that name."

My chief smiled and nodded at the girl in a half-confidential way, which spoke of a perfect understanding between them. It was, indeed, a wonderful exhibition of the tact which never failed him when he needed it, that he had brought the girl up to the point of an important test without the slightest feeling of misgiving or alarm on her part.

That my chief had, by no means, exhausted his store of surprises, became evident when

he began his examination of the girl. There was nothing psychological about it. He questioned her very much as Ashton would have done. He read no list of associative words, and the pair of telephones and chronograph might, so far as I could see, have just as well been left in the laboratory.

His first questions were about the cloak; where she had bought it, and whether, so far as she knew, there were a good many others like it. The girl's whole interest, as shown by her replies, appeared to be to perfect her identification of it. She admitted, reluctantly, that hundreds of them had been sold in the city that fall; admitted that she herself had seen dozens on the street, the counterpart of it in cut and in color. But this particular cloak, she protested, she knew without a doubt to be her own. It was badly rumpled and had been exposed to the weather, was hardly fit to wear any more, but, notwithstanding these facts, she knew that it was hers.

“Was it in good condition the last time you wore it?”

“It looked as good as new.”

“Then how can you be sure that the one which was advertised as found is the same one?”

Well, she was sure, and she proceeded to demonstrate the fact by a multitude of details—some of her own sewing, and a patch on the lining which she could not mistake.

Ashton yawned rather ostentatiously at this time, and observed, behind his hand, that there really wasn't any doubt of her identification; they wouldn't have let the cloak go unless this had been established beyond a doubt.

The doctor turned blandly back to Jane.

“How did you come to lose the cloak?” he asked.

“I don't know, sir,” she answered. “I just wish I did. I think one of the other housemaids stole it, sir, or borrowed it and didn't bring it back. I suppose they thought because I was sick I wouldn't have any use for my cloak. I didn't know nothin' about it until today. Then I looked for it and it was gone. So I begun askin' the other girls about

it, and at last one of them said—she was a girl who had given notice and was readin' the want columns every day—she said there was a green cloak advertised found. So I went and got it. But I'd like to get hold of the girl that borrowed it. I'd make her take it and buy me a new one, or I'd have the law on her."

Ashton had listened to this speech with a show of somewhat greater interest. Evidently it occurred to him that an inquiry as to who the girl suspected of having taken it might be productive of results. She could easily be induced to tell all she knew about the other employees in the hotel. So much was clear. But when, instead of following up this lead, Doctor McAlister changed the subject abruptly, Ashton dropped back in his chair with a little gesture of impatience.

For myself, the doctor's course puzzled me profoundly. That all this examination was a mere pretense, was, of course, obvious to me. We knew all about Jane Perkins, infinitely more about her than she knew about herself. We knew she had worn the cloak;

knew that she, or the woman, rather, who had for a while inhabited her body, had actually murdered old Morgan. And if the object of the pretense were to keep Ashton amused, to make him believe that it was leading him to a possible solution of the mystery, then it had signally failed. Ashton was bored and rather disgusted. But it was not like my chief to fail, and certainly there was no look of defeat about his face. He was accomplishing something, I felt sure, though I could not even guess what that something was.

His next question seemed to me to be getting somewhat nearer the point, although it was the very one that made Ashton drop back in his chair with that gesture of impatience

"Are your parents living, Jane?"

"No, sir. Neither of them."

"Have you lived in this country long?"

"Five or six years, sir."

"You're from New Zealand, or Australia, aren't you? You're not English?"

That question made Ashton sit up at any rate, that and the girl's answer to it.

“Wellington, New Zealand, sir. But how did you know?”

The answer had come instantly, but the next moment, with eyes perplexed, and with a vague gesture of her hands across them, she said:

“It’s queer. It seems as if I had dreamed of talking to you about that.”

Ashton shot a quick look at the doctor. “How did you come to guess that?” he demanded.

“The speech is distinctive,” said my chief, smiling in candid admission of the fact that this was not an answer to the question. “A fine ear can tell the difference.”

Then he turned back to the girl. “You knew, didn’t you, Jane, that this Morgan who was murdered was a New Zealander?—Oh, New Zealand has produced some great men. You’re young, and I suppose you don’t remember, perhaps have never even heard of Bully Franklin and Josiah Haines. Old Morgan knew about them, though, I’ll wager.”—He stood for a minute in smiling

silence, like one who tastes, in reminiscence, the flavor of an old story.

Then he pulled himself together and began asking the girl a series of rapid and, to me, rather meaningless questions. They were chiefly about Will Harvey, her acquaintance with him, how long ago it had begun and, in a general way, to what length of intimacy it had gone. The girl answered all these questions freely enough and with no appearance of hesitation.

"You knew he lived at Oak Ridge, didn't you," the doctor asked finally, "only two or three blocks from the house where Morgan was murdered?"

"You don't think he had anythin' to do with the murder, do you?" she asked. And then she laughed a little. "He wouldn't do nothin' of that kind, sir. He's just a silly."

"I'm inclined to think, Perkins," the doctor commented, "that that's a good diagnosis. I don't believe Will Harvey, even if he showed us every thought within that rather empty head of his, would ever take us very

close to old Henry Morgan with his maps and his mysteries.”

He turned away there rather sharply, his back to all of us; tossed his head back once or twice, with a gesture very familiar to me as characteristic of his periods of intense thought. Then, turning back, he spoke to Ashton.

“Did we tell you,” he asked, “that Phelps and I discovered one map which your detectives had evidently overlooked, an odd sort of map, from a geographer’s point of view, drawn on a very large scale? And the queer thing about it was, that it showed neither latitude nor longitude. There was nothing about it to indicate what part of the world it represented. I brought it away with me this morning. I’ll show it to you presently if you care to look at it. It’s there on the table in that big manila envelope.”

“I beg your pardon, sir”—it was Wilkins who spoke—“I wonder if you could spare me now, sir. I’m supposed to be in the dining-room at this hour.”

The capacity of a trained servitor like

Wilkins for eliminating himself, transforming himself into a mere piece of furniture, is something extraordinary. He had sat through the whole examination, ever since the mild little joke about the portentous name of the machine he had been harnessed to, with a countenance of the same wooden imperturbability that he always wore when on duty in the dining-room.

Ashton and I started simultaneously at the sound of his voice, for both of us had practically forgotten that he was there. The doctor unfastened the long flexible wires by which he was harnessed to the instrument.

"I hope we haven't kept you too long, Wilkins," he said. "It was very good of you to come."

"Not at all, sir. Don't mention it, sir. Sorry I have to leave now."

"Well," said the doctor slowly, "I think we're about through, anyway. Jane here has been ill, and we mustn't keep her too long.—I don't think of anything else I want to question you about, Jane. Thank you very much for helping us."

He removed the little telephone that hung before the girl's lips, and slipped a dollar bill into her hand as he spoke. Then he turned to Wilkins, who had risen, still in his harness, and was scrutinizing, with amused curiosity, the portentously named instrument to which he had been attached.

The doctor, with a smile, was unstrapping the small recording instruments that were attached to his chest and wrists. "We're very much obliged," he said. "You've really helped us materially."—His tone was low and confidential, not intended for the girl's ears. "I don't think she's any the worse for her examination, Wilkins," he concluded.

"Oh, no; likely not, sir. She looks a little pale, but I fancy that is no more than because the room is somewhat close."

"Is it?" asked the doctor.

"Well, it struck me so, sir. And I think, if you'll allow me, it might be well to have that ventilator cleaned. It is really very foul, sir. If you like, I'll speak to them in the office and have them send up a man tomorrow to do it."

He nodded, when he spoke of the ventilator, to a grated opening in the wall, and my eyes followed his. I didn't see anything wrong with it myself, but the man's eyes were evidently more practiced than mine.

The doctor feed him also, and liberally, and the next moment the head-waiter and the chambermaid were out in the corridor and the door was closed behind them.

At the sound of that closing door, Ashton exploded, not with impatient anger, as I half expected he would, but with pure amusement. He laughed loud and long, and without the slightest effort to suppress his mirth. Doctor McAlister paid no attention, but let him enjoy his laugh undisturbed.

"Well," said the district attorney when he had got his breath, "I am really very much obliged. After hearing so much about these psychological examinations, it's interesting to have been present at one."

The doctor nodded rather grimly. "It's not half as interesting as it will be in about five minutes," he said.

He was busy with the instruments on the

table as he spoke. "Do you care to wait and see the results?" he added.

"Come—" said Ashton; "you don't really believe, do you, that you have found out anything, by some subtle, scientific process of yours, about that girl?"

"I know all about the girl already," said my chief. "But come, were you really taken in by the trick?"

"What trick?"

"Did you think, all the while, that it was the girl I was examining?"

A great light suddenly burst upon me, but Ashton was not so quick. His face went perfectly blank.

"Did I think it was the girl you were examining! What else could you have been doing? Who else was there to examine?"

"Wilkins!" said the doctor with a blow of his fist upon the table. "Wilkins! And, by thunder, I believe I have got him."

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

FANENNA'S STORY

1. 1990年12月25日，在俄罗斯莫斯科市克里姆林宫，俄罗斯总统叶利钦在克里姆林宫正式签署《俄罗斯联邦宪法》。

CHAPTER XI

FANENNA'S STORY

“**W**ILKINS!” repeated Ashton.
“What sort of farce is this?”

“If it turns out to be a farce,” said the doctor, “it will be of your making. If I were clothed in your authority and know only what I know at this moment, I would go to that telephone and call in some trusty man to watch him; and if my guess survives the test to which I am about to put it, I should, within the next half hour, order his arrest.”

He turned away too quickly to see the shrug of tolerant contempt which was all the answer Ashton vouchsafed to this suggestion. He unscrewed the megaphone which had been attached to the instrument to which Wilkins had been harnessed, and attached to it a pair of ear tubes to listen through, a glass tube

which looked like a thermometer and another tube which terminated in a glass bulb, half full of a red liquid. He put the listening tubes to his ears and started the machine.

"Give Ashton a cigar, and don't let him talk," was his last injunction to me.

For nearly a quarter of an hour after that there was silence in the room; but at last he stopped the cylinder which was revolving in the instrument, took the tubes from his ears and laid them on the table. Then he turned to us.

"I was right, Ashton," he said. "I know you want an explanation, and I'm going to give it; but if Wilkins is to be at large during the time it will take me to tell the story, I want the responsibility to be upon you, and not upon me. If I were in your place, I should order his arrest."

"I'll take the responsibility," said Ashton. "Until I know some reason that isn't absolutely farcical for arresting a man, I won't arrest him. At the same time I shall be glad to hear this story of yours."

The doctor nodded. "Well," he said,

"since you're in no hurry, I think I'll take time to light a cigar myself."

He had it drawing comfortably and had got himself comfortably ensconced in a big easy chair, his feet stretched out in front of him upon a tabouret, before he began to talk.

"Do you remember," he asked, "what we chatted about on our drive to St. Martin's Hospital the other night?"

"If my memory serves me correctly," said Ashton, "we didn't talk about the murder at all. You spent most of the time, unless I am mistaken, telling pirate stories."

The doctor nodded. "Do you remember my telling you how Bully Franklin came to his end? He was killed by one of his crew as the result of jealousy and a love affair. Now that murder had some rather interesting consequences—"

"What is this," Ashton interrupted, "a parable? Am I supposed to draw some subtle, devious psychological connection between that murder and this one that we're concerned with?"

"Not at all," said the doctor. "I know

you much too well. The connection between that murder and this is literal. It's about the most direct connection that could possibly exist between two events separated by half a world and nearly two decades of time. The second murder was the logical consequence of the first; the second act of the tragedy. I don't say the last act, because I suspect there's another still to come."

"You've actually traced a connection?" Ashton asked with a gasp.

He was sitting up straight in his chair now, and the eagerness in his voice was enough to atone for the negligent contempt which had characterized his attitude in the past.

"Let me tell my story right-end-to," said the doctor. "You'll see the connection plainly enough when I come to it. I told you, I think, that Franklin's crew became completely disorganized after his death, and that most of the members of it were apprehended and paid the penalty of their crimes. There were two, however, who escaped. One of them was his first mate, Josiah Haines. He seems to have been an able man himself, and

I don't fully understand, even now, why he let the reins of authority slip out of his hands so easily. Any way, he disappeared completely. The other man who escaped was Franklin's murderer. He disappeared, too, at least he was never brought to justice. The authorities, for some reason, didn't seem to regard his capture as especially important, for no price was ever put upon his head. That man's name was Henry Morgan."

I had seen what was coming, but it was clear that Ashton had not. His eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped slack, the cigar he held fell from his nerveless fingers.

"Henry Morgan!" he repeated. "The same man?"

"Undoubtedly the same. He fled almost immediately after committing the murder, but not until he had gone through his chief's pockets, and possibly rifled his stateroom besides. At any rate, he got away with what ready cash Franklin had upon him—and he was famous, I remember, for carrying a good deal—and also some papers. The money he got may have amounted to a really handsome

figure—two or three thousand pounds, perhaps. But it was utterly insignificant compared to the potential value of another thing he took with him. That other thing was the map, of which I spoke just now.”

He stretched out his arms, rose from his chair and took a turn or two about the room.

“I ought to amend that last remark,” he continued. “I don’t know myself how great the potential value of that map may be. Its importance in the eyes of Josiah Haines was undoubtedly very great, and Haines was in a position to know, if anyone was. Franklin always had a reputation for possessing a good business head. Many as were the robberies he committed, numerous as were the unfortunate people whom he murdered outright, he gained more by fraud than by violence. He cheated vastly more men than he killed. He was always making bargains with people, and always getting the best of them. I have little doubt that he laid up a really considerable fortune. But whatever it amounted to, he hid it in that particularly forsaken corner of the world which is indi-

cated by a cross upon that map. As I said, Morgan got the map and fled to America with it."

"It seems to me," Ashton interjected, "that he would have done better to have gone straight to this forsaken island and collected the treasure first. But then, so far as that goes, how do you know he didn't?"

"Because he couldn't," said the doctor. "Franklin had outwitted him after all. He had to make a map, for the location of the treasure was too complex to trust to memory. But he made the map perfectly worthless to anyone who was a stranger to his secret, by omitting latitude and longitude from it. There was nothing about it to inform its possessor where, in the whole South Pacific, that island was located; and the South Pacific is a big place. So Morgan did what was, perhaps, the most sensible thing he could have done; he hid himself in the securest place he could find and began making a collection of maps."

Ashton ran his hands through his hair, and then shook his head in perplexity.

"Well," he said, "if applied psychology will enable you to make discoveries like that, I apologize to it most humbly."

"That wasn't psychology at all," said the doctor; "it was plain logic. I found torn up scraps of maps in his waste-paper basket, making it perfectly evident that he had destroyed them after they had served, or had failed to serve some purpose of his. That put him at once out of the class of the mere geographer. I knew he must have some standard he tested these maps by; knew that he must keep it in some easily accessible place. Finding it, after I had discovered a principle like that to guide me, was comparatively easy business."

"Go on," said Ashton; "I won't interrupt any more. The strangeness of this tale makes me feel as if I were losing my wits; but it's altogether too well corroborated not to listen to."

"Now," said the doctor, "for a moment we go back to Haines. I am inclined to think that he got possession of the other half of Franklin's secret, namely, the latitude and

longitude of the island where the treasure was buried."

"If he knew that," I ventured, "why wasn't it enough for him! Why didn't he go and find the treasure for himself?"

"He couldn't dig up the whole island," the doctor replied. "I think it not unlikely that he went there, only to learn the futility of proceeding any farther without the map. There is another possible alternative; that he never happened upon the secret of latitude or longitude at all, though he had it lying right under his hand. At any rate, he knew that Morgan had the map. He knew, or felt sure, that with the map he could recover the treasure, and he believed the treasure well worth the trouble of recovering. He was a man who knew how to wait, how to bide his time. I can't tell you how he spent it, whether he searched the world for his man, with the definite purpose—the sole purpose of finding him, or whether it was chance that at last, after a lapse of many years, put him upon the trail. But this much I do know, that he found him at last, and that Henry

Morgan was murdered as the result of an attempt Haines made to recover the map."


"But the woman!" cried Ashton. "You've told me nothing about her!"

"No," said the doctor. "In order to simplify the story, so far I have left her out, but she plays a very vital part in it. To tell you what that part is, I shall have to go back to the beginning of my story again.—I hope I am not boring you." His smile, as he made that polite observation, had a touch of satirical grimness about it.

Ashton laughed a nervous laugh, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Bored!" he ejaculated. "Go ahead with the yarn."

"You remember the Maori girl about whom Franklin and Morgan had their quarrel? They were both in love with her. But Morgan murdered Franklin and then disappeared, so that from having two lovers, the girl was left without any. Franklin was, no doubt, the one she cared about, in spite of the fact that he was fat and baldheaded, by no means a romantic type of lover. But he had a



charm about him, there's no getting away from that, and he carried it to the day of his death. And then, of course, the girl's interest may have been mercenary, though that I am inclined to doubt.

"Anyhow, some months after Franklin's death she bore him a daughter. She must have been bitterly disappointed that it was not a son; but, making the best of a bad matter, she swore the child, upon her death-bed, to avenge the murder of her father.

"Well, the girl grew up, and in some way or other—I don't know whether it was by chance or design—she fell into the hands of Josiah Haines, and was used by him as the mere instrument in carrying out his purpose. I don't know certainly whether it was by her aid that he got on Morgan's trail; but this I do know, that he despatched her to the Oak Ridge house that night for the purpose of stealing Henry Morgan's precious map from him.

"I do not know positively whether he ordered her to murder him by way of exacting recompense for all the trouble his flight

had caused, but that is what she did. She made a tourniquet out of a violin string, with two loops in it and a pipe stem, with which she strangled the old man, exactly according to the etiquette of the part of the world from which she comes. And then she came away, but without the map. Two days after the murder she escaped from the hospital, a fact which can't be much of a mystery to anyone who saw her get out of the third story window of Henry Morgan's study, as Phelps and I did the next night."

"An amazing tale," commented Ashton when he had finished. "And yet I've lived in this world long enough to be aware that amazing things are always happening in it, infinitely more amazing than the things men make up to put in books. I won't ask you now how you found it out, whether you got the whole of it, intact, at once, or whether you pieced it together. That story will have to be deferred to some hour of greater leisure. You haven't yet related it to ourselves in any way. You haven't yet told me what connection Wilkins and this housemaid can have

with the crime, except by pointing out the coincidence that the girl comes from New Zealand.

“But the thing I most want you to do, the thing I most earnestly beg you to do is to suggest how I can set about finding this wild girl, in whose actual person the crime was committed. I beg of you to give over these elaborate experiments upon people who can't have an important connection with the crime and devote this great mind of yours to the apprehension of the real criminal. If we can get the girl, we shall get hold of her accomplice fast enough, or, perhaps, I should say her principal.”

The doctor smiled. “This morning at the breakfast table,” he observed, “you were very confident that the police would be able to get hold of her in the course of the day. You thought that a strange, wild creature like that, chattering a foreign language, couldn't remain hidden more than a few hours.”

“Well,” said Ashton petulantly, “wasn't that a reasonable thing to suppose?”

“Absolutely,” the doctor agreed. “It was

so reasonable and so obviously true that I wonder at your not sticking to it. You said a wild creature like that couldn't remain at liberty. I say it's true she couldn't."

"But," objected Ashton, "she has."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Why can't you be reasonable?" he asked. "If a thing's impossible, it can't happen. If it's true that a wild creature can't go at large in this community for twenty-four hours without being apprehended, and if it's also true that in twenty-four hours no such creature has been apprehended, then there is only one logical conclusion to come to, namely, that she has ceased to be a wild creature, gibbering in an outlandish language, and has become a much more inconspicuous member of society."

Ashton opened his eyes wide. "What do you mean?"

"Psychology," said the doctor; "hocus-pocus and any of your other names for it that you choose to apply. Didn't you hear me tell Reinhardt at the hospital that that girl was in a hypnotic or subjective state?

When a person is in such a state, they can come out of it, and when they come out, they're likely to be altogether different from what they were when they were in that state."

Ashton sprang to his feet. "Do you know where she is?" he demanded. "Or can you describe her so that I and my men can find her?"

"I don't know where she is at this moment," said the doctor quietly. "She was in this room half an hour ago."

In that moment my chief had his revenge for all the flippancies, tolerant contempt, and good-natured sneers with which Ashton had belabored the profession and science which was dearest to his heart. For once the lawyer was beyond the power of speech.

The doctor, too, kept silent for a while to let the momentous nature of the astounding fact which he had just disclosed sink in. Then he began to explain to the astonished attorney.

"I want you to understand very clearly, in the first place, that it has been by my own methods, with the addition, I'll admit, of a

little plain, unmerited good luck, that I've solved this mystery. Harvey's testimony at the inquest was my clue. In my examination of him, which I conducted without asking him a single question, without once referring directly to the crime that was committed at Oak Ridge, I proved him innocent as convincingly as the strongest alibi would have proved him innocent, more convincingly, in fact, because the real criminal in this case could prove an alibi, too. And in my further examination of him I discovered Jane Perkins, and without learning her exact address, I ascertained the neighborhood in which she lived. She was the woman with whom the profile on the window shade in the Morgan House associated itself in his mind. Only by a very extraordinary coincidence could this woman, with the same sort of profile, the same colored hair and the same kind of cloak, have been any other than the one whose hands strangled old Morgan.

"The telephone conversation which you held in my laboratory with one of your subordinates settled her identity almost be-

yond a doubt. The fact that her name was Jane Perkins and that she was a perfectly conventional type of English chambermaid didn't throw me off the track for a moment, because I knew, as you might have known, that the strange, wild personality of the girl we found in the hospital was fugitive, and possibly accidental.

"I'll confess that when she first came into this room my belief in her physical identity with the woman I had seen in Henry Morgan's study was shaken for an instant, for her whole appearance, not only of face, but the articulation and poise of body was strikingly different. But with the second look, the resemblance began to shape itself. When I saw the tattoo mark on her arm, that, of course, reduced the case to a certainty.

"It took only a dozen questions to convince me that in the person of Jane Perkins she was totally ignorant of the crime, which was exactly what I expected. I then hypnotized her, and succeeded in fishing up her other personality, from whom I got not only the admission that she had strangled Henry

Morgan, but a considerable part of the story which I have just been telling you of the events which led up to the commission of the crime. She did not recover the personality of Jane Perkins until I called her out from the inner room to begin the examination."

By that time Ashton began to come out of his daze, had recovered again the powers of speech and motion, which the astounding nature of the doctor's revelation had temporarily deprived him of.

"She mustn't be at large another minute," he said.

He walked across the room toward the telephone.

"Wait!" commanded the doctor. "There's plenty of time. You haven't got the whole story yet, and you may spoil everything if you move without it."

I was pleased, and secretly a little amused, at the implicit obedience which Ashton gave to this command. An hour ago he would have laughed at it, but within this hour my chief had so bewildered him, had so completely demonstrated the validity of the prin-

ciples that had guided this search, that there was nothing left for the attorney to do but submit, with childlike incomprehension, to the doctor's guidance.

"The girl's part of the crime," the doctor went on, "is only half of it, and the least important part at that. She was hardly more than a passive instrument. The party you want, the important one to get, is the man who sent her on that fatal errand to the lonely house in Oak Ridge that night. The man you want is Josiah Haines."

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

WHAT THE TRAP CAUGHT

[illegible]

CHAPTER XII

WHAT THE TRAP CAUGHT

AT that a smouldering spark of incredulity in Ashton's mind was fanned into a flame.

"Come," he said; "you have told me that the wild South Sea Island girl of this story is really Jane Perkins; but you aren't going to tell me that Josiah Haines is a submerged and secondary consciousness beneath the urbane exterior of our friend Wilkins. That would be drawing it a bit too strong, wouldn't it?"

Without making any answer, the doctor turned back to his instrument, replaced upon it the megaphone which had been there during the conduct of the examination, and made some trifling adjustments in the instrument. And then, once more, addressed the attorney.

"You thought I was joking," he said, "when I told Wilkins that this instrument

was a phonopneumosphygmograph. Wilkins thought so, too, which was precisely the thing that I wished. The name, perhaps, is a bit clumsy. It is really a description of the instrument, rather than a handy name for it. It is three instruments in one. A phonograph first, by which sounds are recorded upon a moving cylinder in such manner that they can be reproduced. In exactly the same manner the pulse of a person on whose wrist this little instrument is strapped is recorded in the wax of the cylinder. So it is also a recording sphygmograph. And thirdly, and last of all, the elastic strap which I fastened around Wilkins' chest had its two ends connected by a little instrument which registered, very scientifically and very truly, every movement of his respiration. Everything, from the slightest, most faintly drawn breath to a gasp, will be indicated by that little instrument and recorded along with a pulse beat on the same cylinder which records the sounds. The long thin tube there that looks like a thermometer will show, when I start this instrument going, exactly how the man

I was examining breathed; when he held his breath, when he caught it, when he expelled it. And the bulb which you see, half filled with the red liquid, will show you the way his heart was beating."

"And the phonograph?" I inquired.

"It's by means of the phonograph," he answered, "that I put the cause and effect together. Wilkins didn't talk. He sat there perfectly still in his chair, his face perfectly impassive, held so by what must have been a most tremendous effort of will. You two men paid no attention to him, and I pretended to ignore him also. And, indeed, anything I could have learned by watching him would have been useless. But no effort of will is powerful enough to control the beating of a man's heart or the drawing of his breath, when strange and terribly familiar matters begin crowding themselves on his attention. The phonograph records what I said and what the girl said, and the tube there and the bulb show how those questions and answers affected the passive-looking man who never dreamed that he was under observation.

"Now listen and watch."

He touched a lever, and the record cylinder began to revolve. The phonograph, as you may remember, had nothing important to say, for the questions the doctor asked the girl about the cloak, and her answers to them had been matters about which we knew already. But it was distinctly uncanny to watch the steady, rhythmic throb of the red liquid in the bulb, and the deliberate, regular rise and fall of the column of liquid in the tube, and to realize that it was a human heart we saw beating there and the breath of a man's life.

"You will understand now," the doctor observed to me, with a wave of his hand toward the instrument, "why I began my apparent examination of the girl with that long list of perfectly futile questions. It's precisely on the same principle upon which we gave Harvey a dozen neutral words in our associative list before the first real test word came along. I saw that it puzzled you."

Then he turned to Ashton. "In every psychological examination," he said, "the first

thing to establish is the subject's normal action along the lines which the examination is to follow. It was necessary here to learn what Wilkins' normal pulse was, and how deeply and how fast he breathed when he was comfortably seated and not under the influence of any excitement. My questioning the girl about the cloak caused him no misgivings whatever. He knew that her story would hold together, and that so long as she continued to be Jane Perkins she would stick to it, because it was, from her point of view, true."

The phonograph had been going all the while he talked, repeating the trivial examination upon which he commented. And now the doctor was suddenly silent, and, with a gesture called upon us for our closest attention.

" 'Are your parents living, Jane?'

" 'No, sir, neither of them.'

" 'Have you lived in this country long?'

" 'Five or six years, sir.'

" 'You're from New Zealand—' "

It was uncanny, there was no getting away

from that, for at that word "New Zealand," the steady pulse faltered, and the slow, regular breath was caught with a little upward jerk. It was only momentary, the next instant it went on as regularly as before. I felt my own heart beating rather fast, and Ashton was staring with all his eyes.

There was more to come.

" 'You're young,' " the remorseless instrument was repeating in the doctor's even, good-humored voice, " 'and I suppose you don't remember, perhaps have even never heard of Bully Franklin and Josiah—' "

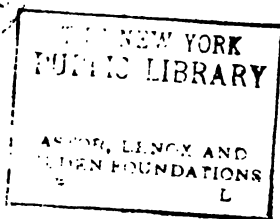
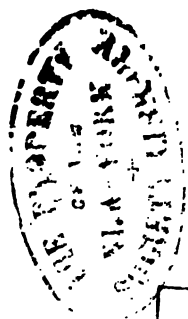
"Good God!" cried Ashton.

For myself, I felt the cold perspiration break out all over me, at the sight of what that merciless little pair of scientific instruments revealed. It was horrible, in a way, a little like vivisection. It was a vivisection of a human soul, for at the mention of those two names the man's heart had given one appalling leap, and then, for three mortal seconds, registered by the ticks of the big clock in the corner, stood dead still.

The breath stopped, too, and, in the same



“ ‘ Good God ! ’ cried Ashton . ”



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moment, the phonograph fell silent, for the doctor, after delivering that deadly thrust, in a tone whose kindly humor now seemed so remorselessly ironical had turned away in smiling silence, like one who tastes, in reminiscence, the flavor of an old story.

Long before the end of that silence, the man's heart began to beat again, or not so much to beat as to flutter. The speed of that pulse would have been beyond a doctor's power to count; it must have been close to two hundred a minute. The breathing started, too, in little jerky gasps.

Ashton turned away. "It's hideous," he said; "it's inhuman. I can't look at it;" and as he spoke, he walked away to the other side of the room.

But he came back and stood beside us when the phonograph began again reporting the questions the doctor had asked the girl about Will Harvey, and her answers to them.

"What's this part of the examination for?" Ashton asked. "You knew all about it; and you'd sprung your mine on Wilkins."

"There's another mine of a different sort

a little further along," said the doctor. "I wanted to give him time to recover his self-possession, to persuade himself that that, too, was all a false alarm; that my mention of the names of Haines and Franklin was just a coincidence.

"You see," he concluded, "I had two people to reckon with—himself and you."

"Me?" Ashton questioned.

"Yes, you and your incredulity. I knew that if I concluded the examination there, that long before I could make this demonstration to you, Wilkins would have made good his escape; and a man like that, once he got away, is cunning enough to be hard to find. So I wanted not only to calm his fears, but to provide him with a positive incentive for staying around."

Ashton would have spoken, but at that moment, with a suddenly upraised hand, the doctor motioned him to silence and to renewed attention.

I had had my eye upon the instrument all the time the doctor had been talking, and had seen that by now the doctor's questions

concerning Harvey had had the effect he wanted. Wilkins' pulse and respiration were back almost to normal again.

" '—would ever take us very close to old Henry Morgan with his maps and his mysteries.' "

The word "map" caused a throb and a flutter both in the tube and the bulb, much as the word "New Zealand" had done at the beginning of the examination. The recovery was immediate, however, and during the silence which followed, the condition in the tube and the bulb became more nearly normal than it had been since the beginning of the examination.

At the end of the silence, the phonograph began reporting the doctor's apparently irrelevant aside to Ashton, in which he had told him of the discovery of the one queer map which the detectives had overlooked, a large scale map which showed neither latitude nor longitude. As he began to talk about it, both pulse and breathing, as the instrument revealed them, began to tell another story, not a story of terror this time, but of excitement.

The pulse quickened, but it grew stronger, too, steadily stronger, and steadily more rapid, until it was leaping like the heart of a man who, in the midst of battle, catches a gleam of victory. And the column of liquid in the respiration tube rose clear to the top of it, and then fell to the bottom. The man had been drawing great long, steady breaths of triumph.

“ ‘—and I brought it here with me this morning,’ ” the phonograph was saying in the doctor’s voice, “ ‘and I’ll show it to you directly if you care to look at it.’ ”

There was a little silence after that, and then, still from the megaphone of the instrument, there came another voice, a voice which it had not recorded before, the voice of Wilkins, the polite, imperturbable, the obsequious.

“ ‘I beg your pardon, sir. I wonder if you could spare me now. I’m supposed to be in the dining-room at this hour.’ ”—

“ ‘He’ll be back,’ ” said the doctor grimly. “ ‘That map has been the focal point of his life for a good many years. He would run a

bigger risk than he could possibly think lay in breaking into this apartment, to get it. He's on duty in the dining-room until twelve, and I imagine he'll stay there, but as far as we're concerned, it's only a question of putting out our lights and waiting."

"Well," said Ashton, "do you think we can handle him, we three?"

The doctor stretched out his arms and clenched his big hands, lazily, as a man does when he first wakes up. "Oh, I think so," he said.

Ashton nodded. "By the way," he said, "I'd like to see that map. It must be something of a curiosity."

"If you'll come out to Oak Ridge with me tomorrow," said the doctor, "I'll take pleasure in showing it to you. There's nothing in the envelope. It was only necessary to make Wilkins think there was."

"But where's the envelope itself?" Ashton asked. "Didn't you say it was here on the table? I don't see it."

The doctor whirled round as if something had stung him. Never before, I think, in all

the years I have known him had I seen him so completely taken aback as he was at that moment.

“It must be somewhere,” said I. “It was lying in plain sight when the doctor spoke to you about it.”

But it was all in vain that we rummaged among the littered papers upon the table top. The big manila envelope was gone.

THE SCENT



CHAPTER XIII

THE SCENT

FOR a moment we stood gazing blankly into each other's faces, stupidly trying to realize, to the full, what the disappearance of that big, empty manila envelope meant. Ashton was the first to recover himself. He shot a quick question at me.

"Do you remember, Phelps, whether or not, when Wilkins spoke of the ventilator being foul, you glanced in the direction of it?"

"Yes," I admitted I did.

"You?" questioned Ashton, turning to the doctor.

"Oh, yes," said Doctor McAlister. "There's no fool like an old fool."

"Well, I did, too," said Ashton, "and that's when Wilkins took the envelope."

He pulled out his watch, frowned at it,

snapped it shut and put it back into his pocket.

"I didn't realize this demonstration had taken so long," said he. "He's had nearly an hour."

"Provided he fled at once," I suggested.

"He was almost certain to do that," said Ashton. "He probably ripped open the envelope the moment he closed the door behind him, and, finding it empty, would know, of course, that the thing had been merely a trap to catch him."

"And it's my fault, Ashton," said the doctor contritely. "I was guilty of an absurd piece of over-confidence. I knew he'd want the map, and no other way of his getting it occurred to me, than that he should come back here when he supposed we were all asleep, and let himself in with a pass key and steal it."

But the man he spoke to was already the other side of the room, standing before the telephone and shaking up and down the little hook which supports the receiver.

"Give me the dining-room, please," we

heard him say.—“The dining-room? This is Mr. Ashton. I'd like to speak with Wilkins.”

It was easy to guess the nature of the reply he got to that request, from the question or two which he interjected into it and from his attitude as he turned away and hung up the receiver.

“It's as I thought. He's not been in the dining-room since he went off duty after the dinner hour. They wondered what had become of him, and sent a messenger up to his room in the servants' quarters. The messenger reports the room locked and dark. He'll never come back to it, we may be sure of that; not of his own free will, at least.”

“He has an hour's clear start,” exclaimed the doctor, “thanks to my stupidity.”

“Well,” said Ashton, “he hasn't got off yet, by any means. It's a straight police case now, and I think they're likely to get him—if not in this city, at least before he can leave the country, which is undoubtedly what he will try to do.”

He turned back to the telephone and called up police headquarters, attempted to, rather,

listened a moment to something that was being said to him, and then turned away with a very wry face.

“Well, our friend Wilkins is playing in luck all right,” he said. “The local operator tells me that we have no outside connection at all. Both the telephone and the local station here of the Western Union are out of commission on account of this confounded sleet.”

He hung up once more, and took a turn or two across the room, in a thoughtful abstracted silence. But presently he halted in front of my chief and held out his hand.

“Of course it’s absurd for you to think you’re to blame because Wilkins got away, Doctor McAlister, or to say that it’s through your stupidity that it happened. The fault is certainly as much mine as yours. You detected the criminal, but you couldn’t catch him. I could have caught him right enough, but I was incapable of detecting him. He went out literally between our fingers. If we’d been working together he couldn’t have got away. But you offered to work with me and I re-

fused. Of course it's true that any thick-witted sergeant, if he'd been here in this room and had known, as you knew, that Wilkins was under suspicion, would have prevented his stealing the envelope from under our very noses. If I had known, I would have prevented it. I should have been on my guard against the very thing he did. But, on the other hand, neither the police sergeant nor I could have traced Wilkins' connection with the Oak Ridge murder, nor would even have thought of suspecting him."

I have liked Ashton better ever since he made that speech.

"Well, we'll pull together now," said the doctor.

"Not much pulling left to do," said the district attorney. "I must get word to police headquarters at once, and give them a full description of both the man and the girl."

"Do you think she's with him?"

Before he could answer, the telephone bell rang sharply, and the quickness with which he turned and snatched the receiver off the

hook betrayed the tension of excitement under which he was laboring.

“Been looking for me!” he exclaimed.—“A man named Mallory!—Well, why didn’t you try these apartments sooner?—Where is he now?”

.
“All right. Don’t waste any more time.”

“That you, Mallory?”

.
“What’s that you say? You’ve got the girl. Came back to her room, did she?”

.
“What’s she like? Violent at all?”

.
“Well, wait a minute. Hold the wire. I’ll tell you what to do with her.”

He turned round then, and began speaking rapidly to Doctor McAlister.

“The girl went to her room and Mallory has got her. He says she’s perfectly quiet, not violent at all, that is, but she’s taking on a great deal, protesting that her arrest must be a mistake. So it’s clear she hasn’t gone off into one of those subjective states of hers.

But what are we to do with her? Do you suppose she'd be of service to us in getting track of Wilkins? She'd probably take pretty good care not to get him into trouble, I suppose, if she suspected that we really wanted him."

"Tell him to bring her here," said my chief, his eyes shining with excitement. "We shall be able to use her, never fear. Yes, have Mallory bring her to this room."

Ashton hesitated for an instant. Then transmitted the message, word for word, to Mallory, and hung up the receiver.

"I don't quite see it," he went on thoughtfully. "Unless Wilkins took her into his confidence, she won't know anything about him. If he did, she'll be on her guard not to betray him, and a stupid, stubborn person like that sometimes makes a lot of trouble."

The doctor's only reply was a comment, which sounded a little irrelevant.

"I told you, didn't I," said he, "that in her subjective states her whole system of sensory nerves seems to be abnormally stimulated, almost to a hysterical degree?"

I had it on my tongue to ask him what he meant, when the sound of footsteps approaching along the corridor, cut the question short. The next moment there was a tap on the door, and the detective Mallory, ushered Jane Perkins back into our sitting-room.

"Here she is," he said briefly. "Do you want me?"

"Yes," said the doctor; "sit down.—You sit down, too, Perkins; here in the easy chair where you were before.—No, my poor child, there's nothing to be frightened about. Don't cry. We're not going to hurt you."

The perfect poise and balance of his own nerves gave him a tremendous power of calming the nerves and quieting the fears of others. That single sentence, spoken in his calm resonant voice did more to reassure the girl than I could have done in an hour.

But still I had no idea what he meant to do. I had not even a surmise of his purpose, until I saw him take up the little concave mirror with which he had pretended to test her eyes earlier in the evening. He dangled it before her on a string.

"Now you're not afraid any more, Jane," he went on. "This little mirror, swinging so, makes you calm again, even makes you sleepy.—You're going to sleep already. Your eyelids are heavy. Your hands are heavy, too, and quite relaxed, just as they are when you go to sleep.—You're asleep now; fast asleep."

Ashton, who had watched this performance with staring eyes, turned to me.

"Is he hypnotizing her?" he whispered softly.

"He's already done it," said I. "There's no need to whisper. Nothing you or I could do would wake her now."

Once more, and only once, the doctor hummed the strange, droning tune of the death chant, and I saw, by the little shiver that went over the girl's body, that the transformation of her personality had already taken place.

"Watch," said I to Ashton, "watch the girl's face."

"You've been showing me wonders to-night," he said in a voice that was dulled

with amazed bewilderment, "but this is a wonder that out-tops them all."

All that was true, for there, under his eyes, he saw, reappearing in the body of this English chambermaid, the strange wild creature he had gone with us to St. Martin's Hospital to see, a couple of nights before.

The doctor's voice broke the silence. He spoke to the girl, a single, short sentence in what I now recognized to be the Maori tongue. Then, without a pause, he went on,

"I am speaking in English now, Fanenna, and you understand me. Tell me that it is so."

Her answer was a sort of clicking guttural, impossible one would think for a western throat to produce.

"Say it in English," the doctor commanded.

"Ee—es," she said.

The doctor turned to the detective. "Mal-lory," he said, "you know where Wilkins' room in the hotel is, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, but it's locked. He's gone off with the key."

"Don't waste time trying to find another key," said the doctor. "Break the door down and leave it so that we can walk directly in. Then go to this girl's room, find some warm wraps, a hat and a cloak and a pair of overshoes. Then get your own hat and overcoat and come back here."

Mallory hesitated, and cast an inquiring glance toward Ashton.

"Oh, yes," said Ashton with a laugh. "He's the boss now. You'll take all your orders from him."

The doctor smiled. "I think you'll want your overcoat yourself, and let me recommend a cap, if you have such a thing, rather than a derby. There's no telling how long we'll be out, and the air is cold tonight with all this half-frozen dampness in it."

While the other two men went on their several errands, Doctor McAlister and I found our ulsters and caps. The doctor added to his equipment a heavy walking stick and a huge pair of what he called galoshes.

Ashton was ready as soon as we were, and Mallory didn't keep us waiting more than

two or three minutes. He was dressed for the expedition himself, and he had over his arm the green cloak, and in his hand carried a rather preposterous hat, which was just about the sort of piece of millinery one might expect Jane Perkins' taste for adornments of this sort to result in.

The girl got up and huddled herself into the cloak when the doctor handed it to her, in a perfectly natural sort of way, as if it was a garment with which she was well acquainted. When he also offered her the hat, she gazed at it in perfectly blank surprise.

"What—is—that?" she asked.

"A hat," said the doctor. "It goes on your head."

Her eyes lighted with admiration at that. She snatched it out of his hands and clapped it on her head, backwards, I imagine, though I really did not know which was the front and which the back. At any rate, it was evident that with the loss of Jane Perkins' personality, she had also lost all knowledge of this particular sort of feminine apparel. She

was no more able to balance it on her head than one of us would have been, and when two or three trials had resulted in failure, she tossed it away, impatiently, and shook her head.

"No—like," she observed.

The exhibition struck us all as curious and rather grotesque. Mallory, I imagine, thought it was nothing more than that she must be shamming, and I think, perhaps, that even Ashton was a little suspicious.

"However," he said, as though thinking aloud, "it's perfectly true that Harvey said nothing about a hat when he described the silhouette he saw upon the window-shade."

"All ready?" asked the doctor. "Then let's be off.—Mallory, you show us the way. We want to go to Wilkins' room first."

"All of us?" questioned Ashton. "The girl, too?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "She's the important member of this expedition."

I caught then, and it made my flesh creep a little, my first inkling of his purpose. But

it was perfectly evident from Ashton's face that no such idea had occurred to him.

"'Hadn't she better be handcuffed to Mallory?'" he asked, as we were leaving the room. "She might give us the slip."

"No," said the doctor; "she'll follow—follow like a dog."

We threaded our way in silence through the corridors to Wilkins' room. It was a small room, and I stayed back in the corridor with Mallory to make room for my chief and Ashton to go in with the girl.

What I saw through the doorway was curious and interesting. The doctor did not waste a single glance upon the room itself. I suppose that Mr. Sherlock Holmes or any other detective would have found plenty of material up here for study and observation, and, indeed, Ashton was gazing curiously into corners; but Doctor McAlister strode straight across to the wardrobe, flung open the door of it, groped for a moment in its interior, with one hand, then withdrew it, waving, triumphantly, an old shoe.

And now Ashton's eyes lighted up with the

surmise which had come to me a few moments earlier.

"Good God, McAlister!" he exclaimed. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to find Josiah Haines, alias Wilkins, if he hasn't got too long a start on us."

As he finished speaking, he ostentatiously sniffed at the shoe himself, and held it out to the girl.

"Osa Enns," she said.

"Exactly," said the doctor; "Josiah Haines."

"You can't possibly mean," exclaimed Ashton, "that you're going to try to track him with her, as if—as if she were a hound! It's impossible. Impossible and horrible, too," he added with a shiver.

"So far as the horror is concerned," said the doctor, "we can't afford to be squeamish, with telephone and telegraph wires down all over the city, and likely enough trolley wires, too. He has too great an advantage of us to warrant our rejecting any means of finding him that come to hand, even though they are

primitive. As for its being impossible, that's exactly the thing we're going to test. I don't believe it is. The girl scented us half way across Morgan's study, and 'pointed' us, exactly as a setter points a quail. And she confessed to me that she identified the man she murdered by his odor."

Without waiting for any reply, he turned abruptly to the girl and spoke to her in Maori, asking her a question, if one could judge from the odd inflection of the thick, guttural words. In her eyes already there was a kind of smouldering fire. The doctor cried out something more in Maori, and accompanied the exclamation with a gesture of both hands toward the doorway.

The girl darted out between Mallory and me, like some wild beast unleashed, and set out down the corridor at a slow, swinging trot, her head bent low and swaying sideways. It was uncanny to see her. I felt my flesh creep as I set out to follow her.

Mallory had not understood, and he made a motion to detain her, but this was checked by a peremptory order from Ashton.

"Follow along!" cried the doctor. "Keep as close as you can. We mustn't lose sight of her!"

We had lost sight of her already, for she had turned to the right into a cross corridor. When we reached the corner where she had turned, we all halted, as if some medusa hand had suddenly turned us to stone.

"The Meredith" is a high building. We were on the eighth floor, but the girl was in the act of getting out of a window. Mallory recovered the use of his muscles first, and rushed forward in an attempt to forestall what seemed to him a deliberate attempt at suicide.

"Hold on!" cried the doctor. "She's only going where Wilkins went. If there was a way down there for him, she'll be able to follow him safely."

"And wherever they can go," said Ashton, "I guess we can follow."

He started down the corridor as he spoke. I should probably have agreed with him, had I not become aware just then that the door beside which I was standing opened into the

elevator shaft, and the gauge showed that the elevator was descending. I signalled it to stop, on the chance that it might prove useful.

By that time Ashton had already joined Mallory at the window. Apparently one glance was all they needed, for they came hurrying back with white faces.

"She has worked herself along a six inch ledge," said the lawyer, "to an iron stand-pipe. I've seen magazine illustrations of firemen doing things like that, but I didn't know they really happened. It's not conceivable that Wilkins went that way."

"Don't forget that he was Bully Franklin's first mate," said the doctor. "But this is a better way for us. Come along."

We all four piled into the elevator and told the boy to drop us, as quickly as he could, right through to the basement. The excitement in our faces was imperative. He threw the lever over and let us down at a tremendous rate.

"This way," cried Mallory, rushing off in the dark.

We lost sight of him, but heard sounds of a

struggle he was having with a badly warped door which evidently had not been opened in a long time. He conquered it just as we came up with him, and the next moment, peering out in the misty gray light to see whether we had taken the right direction after all, we made out a dark, blurred figure, which was, nevertheless, unmistakable. Still in that crouching attitude, with bowed head swaying from side to side, the girl was working round in widening circles, trying to catch the scent.

It was not because of the cold that we shivered, we four who stood there huddled in the doorway, watching her with staring eyes.

Presently she caught what she had been searching for, straightened up a little out of her crouching attitude, and set out, briskly, at a gait which was neither precisely a walk nor a run, but which, if she should keep it up, would tax our powers to follow.

She threaded her way down a three foot paved passage, which led out of the court and into a larger one, crossed this and vaulted over a low brick wall into the alley which bisected the block behind "The Meredith."

She trotted the length of this, with us straggling along behind her as best we could, crossed the boulevard, without a glance to right or left, and went straight on down the alley and through the next block.

“You see,” commented the doctor, “he took elaborate precautions against being recognized in the immediate neighborhood of ‘The Meredith.’ Almost every guest at the hotel, as well as the full force of servants, know him. But his chance of encountering any such person diminishes rapidly as he gets away from the vicinity of the hotel. He’ll leave the alley to take to the streets presently.”

The prophecy came true. At the very next corner the girl turned to the left, and then held on, straight across two avenues, until she reached a street where the cars ran. She made as if to cross this street, too, for she went straight out to the middle of it; then stopped, obviously at fault, and retraced her steps to the car rail nearest the curb.

“Well, that’s plain enough,” said Ashton in a tone of disappointment. “She’s brought

us so far, but she can't take us any farther, for here is where he took the car."

"Yes," said Mallory, "I suppose that's so, though it's funny the car should stop for him on this side of the street."

"Wait a bit," said the doctor. "Watch the girl."

She was crouched very low again, and quartering round in a circle, just as she had done at the foot of the standpipe. Presently, to the surprise of all of us, unless it may have been that the doctor guessed, she caught a scent that satisfied her and led her diagonally back to the sidewalk; and once here, without a pause, she set out in the direction of downtown, straight down the middle of the sidewalk, her gait, that seemed unhurried, unfaltering, a sure-footed compromise between a walk and a run.

"It seems to be all right," said Ashton rather breathlessly, as we hurried on after her, "only I don't quite see what he went out into the street for."

"To see if a car was coming, I suppose," said the doctor. "There wasn't one in sight,

so, rather than risk waiting, he set out afoot. And I think he did wisely. I haven't seen a car in either direction. Have you?"

We had not, and, what was still more to the point, followed the girl at the rapid pace she set, for half an hour without seeing one.

When we had first set out with her, our curiosity as to what she would do prevented us from paying much attention to the condition of the streets; but when the chase had straightened itself out into this long pursuit down the avenue, we had time to think of our surroundings, and to speculate whether they bettered the chances of the man we were pursuing or improved our own for catching him. The trolley wires were evidently down in every direction, and the streets were so glassy with the frozen sleet and so perilous with the snapping, spitting ends of live wires that trailed here and there, that what little wheel traffic there was moved only with the very greatest difficulty. Without the means of tracing him, which the doctor's hypnotic power over the girl had provided us with, he would, after several hours, have been abso-

lutely secure from pursuit. There would have been no other way in the world of hunting for him than by this simple, primitive method of tracking him by his scent.

“If he only keeps going far enough,” said Ashton, “we’ll catch him. He may have been Bully Franklin’s first mate once, and as such able, for the moment, to summon his powers back. He must have done so to have negotiated that ledge and the stand-pipe. But it was a good many years ago that he was a sea-faring man, and to my personal knowledge he’s been a head waiter for long enough to turn any man’s muscles soft. He never in the world could have kept up the pace that this girl is setting us. We must be overtaking him.”

It was fortunate for us that there were few pedestrians abroad that night, for the girl’s strange, uncanny gait and our hurried, breathless pursuit of her would, in anything like normal conditions, have created a sensation which would have rendered the pursuit itself impossible. As it was, the few people who had ventured out found all they

could attend to in the ice-glazed sidewalks, the wind-whipped corners, the fog and electrical peril of the streets. A few curious glances were cast after us as we went hurrying by, but that was about all.

Suddenly the doctor dropped a hand on my arm. "I know where she's going," he said. "I ought to have guessed it before ever we started. Look there." As he spoke, he pointed ahead and upward, through the fog, and, following the direction of his pointing finger, I made out, faintly, a luminous clock face.

"What is it?" said I. "I haven't kept track of where we were going. The fog confuses me."

"It's the Western station," said the doctor, "and Wilkins, my boy," he punctuated the remark with a buffet on my shoulder, "Wilkins has gone to Oak Ridge! I ought to have known him well enough by this time to have foreseen that that was what he would do."

"I don't believe he'd be such a fool," said Ashton, "but I hope you're right. If he's

gone to Oak Ridge, we've got him. I've got two men out in the Morgan house watching it, on the lookout for anyone who might turn up there, and nobody who does turn up will be able to get away until they have accounted to me for their visit."

We had all lagged a little. "Come along," said the doctor. "We mustn't get too far behind."

We were pretty well winded, all of us, even Mallory was breathing fast, though he tried hard to conceal the fact; but we gathered up our energies for a final sprint, and turned into the great waiting-room just behind her.

She went straight to the ticket window, but without a pause there or a glance through, she turned in a sharp angle, exactly as a dog would do, and padded across the waiting-room toward the doors which opened into the train shed.

"Follow her!" the doctor commanded Mallory. "I'll see about trains."

I was at his elbow when he spoke to the clerk. That functionary was gazing after the girl with wide, terrified eyes.

"In Heaven's name!" he said, "what is she? A woman or a beast?"

The doctor did not answer. He ignored the question utterly.

"When is the next train for Oak Ridge due?" he asked.

The ticket clerk rubbed his hands over his eyes. "Did you see her?" he asked. "That creature that just went through the door?"

I did not wonder that he was horrified. I remembered my own feeling when I had seen her start down the corridor toward Wilkins' room.

The doctor paid no attention, and in the same level voice in which he had spoken before, he repeated his question about the train for Oak Ridge.

With an effort, the clerk rallied his wits and answered him.

"There was a train pulled out about ten minutes ago," he said. "There won't be another tonight. The wires are down on account of the sleet, and we've practically abandoned the suburban service. It's too dangerous. Everything has to run without orders."

“Did you hear that, Ashton?” said the doctor turning away. “The last train to Oak Ridge that will run tonight, left ten minutes ago.”



WHAT MALLORY SAW

100

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT MALLORY SAW

ASHTON had followed Mallory part way across the waiting-room, a little nervous, I think, at the idea of letting the girl out of his sight. So he had not heard what the clerk had just told Doctor McAlister through the ticket window.

"Well," he said, "that is all right, isn't it? We don't want to go to Oak Ridge. If the train Wilkins took started only ten minutes ago, there's ample time to arrange to have him arrested before he sets foot on the platform at Oak Ridge. Where's the telegraph office in this station?"

"It won't do you any good," said Doctor McAlister. "There will be no telegraphic communication with Oak Ridge tonight."

Ashton glanced thoughtfully about the room. "That possibility hadn't occurred to me," he said at last.

“It occurred to Wilkins,” said the doctor. “That’s why he went. He’s the one man of us who really grasped the situation. He knew just what that sleet storm meant—that over a territory fifteen or twenty miles square electricity was going out of the business of serving civilization for a few hours. That one vital fact turns the world topsy-turvy, and makes some difficult things easy and some commonplace things impossible. For just tonight our thoughts can’t move any quicker than our bodies can. So Wilkins has set out for Oak Ridge, and we can’t head him off. The only thing we can do is to follow him. The question is, shall we try to do that?”

I followed Ashton’s glance just then, and saw Mallory coming back with the girl. She seemed unconscious of his presence, and made straight across the room to where the doctor was standing in conversation with us. She halted beside him without a word, her manner perfectly quiet, though expectant. She was merely waiting for him to tell her what he wanted done next.

For the moment he paid no attention to

her, did not even glance sideways at her as she came up.

"That's the question," he repeated to the attorney. "Shall we try to go out to Oak Ridge tonight? You spoke of having two men on watch there all the time. Can you safely leave the matter of coping with Wilkins to them?"

Ashton walked away a few paces, then whirled and came back. His look was troubled, disquieted.

"I wish you were there, Mallory," he said. "Green and Benson aren't any too wide awake. They'll have a man to deal with who has just outwitted us."

"They'd be all right," said Mallory, "if there was only some way of warning them."

"Of course they would!" Ashton snapped impatiently. "Anybody would. But there isn't any way of warning them."

It was not easy for any of us to grasp and fully realize that idea. We of this century have become so completely accustomed to communicating instantaneously with any part of the world, that this impossibility, which

our grandfathers never dreamed of questioning, seemed to us incredible.

"There are two courses of action open to us," said the doctor presently. "One is, to go home and go to bed. The other is, to get hold of an automobile and try to get out to Oak Ridge tonight. Our getting there at all is problematical with the roads in their present condition."

Ashton whirled round and spoke to Mallory, "Go and telephone to the nearest garage for an automobile; quick!" he said. Then, addressing us, he went on, "There is no necessity for your going, Doctor McAlister, or Mr. Phelps, either. But Mallory and I can't afford to waste a minute."

"You've wasted one already," said the doctor, "telling Mallory to go into that telephone booth."

Ashton, heartily cursing his own stupidity, darted off after his messenger.

"I think I'll go along with them," said I to the doctor, "just on the chance of my being of some service."

He laughed. "Are you thinking you'll

leave me behind? Come, Phelps, you know me better than that. No, we'll all go."

His gesture included the strange, silent, expectant figure that had been standing at his elbow all the time.

"Do you mean to take her?" I questioned.

"She's brought us so far. She's given us, up to this point, every material fact that has made it possible for us to establish Haines' identity and get on his trail."

It just happened then that my eyes were on the girl. I saw her shiver, saw a look of human intelligence and perplexity appear for the first time in that strange face of hers. I tried, with a nod, to direct my chief's attention to her, but before he could get my meaning, Ashton came hurrying back.

"There's a garage only two or three blocks away," he said, "and Mallory ought to be back with a car in a very few minutes."

Then he held out his hand to the doctor. "I can't begin to tell you," said he, "how grateful I am for the help you've given us, nor for your patience with my unenlightenment."

"No valedictories now," said the doctor interrupting. "You're not going to be rid of us so easily. We're all going with you."

"Good!" said Ashton. "I hoped you would, though I felt I hadn't any right to ask it of you."

For a moment we waited in silence; then, making a gesture of impatience with his clenched hands, Ashton exclaimed,

"I wish we were off! Every minute we waste seems big with possibilities. I can't help feeling that if Wilkins reaches Oak Ridge before we do, which he is almost certain to do, there will be another murder, and a double one, over there in the Morgan house tonight."

I had thought of that, too, and I could see by his face that the doctor had. But he spoke quietly, and his words were encouraging.

"I don't think he'll kill, unless he's driven to it. For one thing, he'd rather do a neat job than a clumsy one any day. I don't think he meant that Morgan should be murdered in the first place."

"He's a desperate man," said Ashton. "He won't stop for fine distinctions."

"He hasn't acted very desperate so far," the doctor retorted, "and his capacity for fine distinctions is his very most marked characteristic. He has seized every advantage that told in his favor, and made the most of it."

"Come!" cried Ashton. "There's the motor. Let's lose no time."

My memory of the next two hours is one of unrelieved discomfort and constantly increasing apprehension. We bumped along rutty, ill-paved streets, which were, after all, more practicable than the unscratched glare of asphalt. We skidded across street car tracks and had a dozen of what in normal times we should have called narrow escapes, in the first dozen minutes. After that, we stopped counting. By rare good luck our chauffeur was of exactly the right temper for his job. He was audacious to the point of recklessness, and yet skillful enough to avoid each time, by the merest hair's breadth, the

disaster, to the edge of which his daring had led him.

With all his skill he must have been in real danger a great many times, but I don't think any of us thought of it. The excitement of the chase was mounting in our veins. We kept an eye on our watches and another out of the windows of the limousine for possible landmarks which might reveal the rate of our progress.

"He must be there by this time," said Ashton at last with a shudder. "I wish I knew that Green and Benson were still alive."

"I tell you he won't kill," said the doctor, "not if he can help it. He'll do it if they succeed in forcing his hand; that I admit. But his own cleverness is the greatest safeguard those two men could have—his cleverness and their stupidity."

"I wish I shared your confidence," said Ashton.

"Think a minute what the situation is," said the doctor. "Suppose we had him now, safely, in our hands. We know what he is. We know that he is morally responsible for

the murder of Henry Morgan. But suppose you were not the district attorney. Suppose that Haines came to you and retained you in his defense. Wouldn't you tell him that, with the criminal law in its present state and the methods of prosecuting criminals what they are today, you would have an excellent chance of riddling any case that we could make? Wouldn't you tell him that, never in the world, could he be convicted of murder in the first degree, by any court or any jury?"

"Yes," said Ashton ruefully, "I suppose that's true."

"You may be sure," the doctor continued, "that Wilkins realizes that. And realizing it, you may be certain, also, that he will not commit an indubitable first degree murder, if he can help it."

"Murder—"

The word made us all start. It was uttered, hardly above a whisper, by the wild, half-human creature, through whose instrumentality we had been able to get on the true murderer's trail. And yet, in some

subtle way, she had spoken in a new voice; not the soft-throated guttural speech of the Maori girl, nor yet in Jane Perkins' New Zealand modification of cockney.

And when we looked at her, even in the dimly lighted interior of the limousine, her appearance was different, too. The difference was as subtle as it was unmistakable. What we saw was another—radically new personality. Speaking now, in all deliberation, I can think of no better description of it than the one which occurred to me at that moment. It was as if the partition walls which had separated the personality of the stupidly respectable chambermaid from that of the untamed savage of the South Seas were breaking down; as if these two widely-sundered persons were merging into one. Neither Jane Perkins nor Fanenna could have uttered the word "murder" in just that accent of half-apprehended horror.

We were nearing our journey's end. Our road lay alongside the railroad line, and already we could see the one light in the Oak Ridge station window. There was no time

to grapple with the new problem now. My chief, as I expected, proved instantly adequate to the emergency. He turned to her and said something—I do not know what—in the Maori tongue—said it sharply, authoritatively, confidently. The girl turned and gazed into his face, and shivered. Then her tightened muscles relaxed, her eyelids fluttered and closed, and she sank back in her corner of the car, asleep.

Ashton and Mallory were riding backwards, and now the attorney was gazing curiously out of the window.

“This is a queer town,” he said. “It’s two o’clock in the morning, and you wouldn’t expect to see people stirring, even on the main street, at this time of night. We just overtook four men going our way, and here are two more.”

Pat upon his words, as if he had been answering them, the chauffeur spoke to us through the little speaking tube which connected the chauffeur’s seat with the interior of the limousine:

“There’s a house on fire, up ahead there.”

We all looked, and instantly saw a sudden lurid light, which was piling up the sky; saw it pierced the next moment by angry orange-colored flames.

"He's set fire to the house!" the doctor cried; and added, into the speaking tube, "Put on all the speed you can! We've no time to waste!"

The chauffeur obeyed, and within two minutes we were at the scene of the fire, our car sliding along, with locked wheels, into a position just behind the little chemical engine which afforded the town of Oak Ridge what fire protection it had.

The cold air of the winter night was already resonant with the shouts of the firemen and the excited exclamations of the crowd of half-dressed citizens who had gathered to render what assistance they could, and to enjoy the spectacle at the same time.

Mallory had already swung the door open and was half way out of the car, when an exclamation from the doctor stopped him.

"Hold on!" he cried. "This isn't the house. The Morgan house is two blocks fur-

ther on down the street.—Drive on!” he shouted to the chauffeur. “We mustn’t waste a minute!”

Mallory sprang back to his seat, and once more the car lurched forward. The doctor held the door with one hand and leaned far out, scanning the road ahead with eager eyes.

“Drive slow,” he cautioned the chauffeur.

Then he turned and spoke to us inside the car. “I’ve an idea that we better not drive right up to the house. There’s no need of giving any more warning than necessary of the fact that we’re coming.—Look out ahead here, Phelps. Isn’t that white gate half way down the next block the gate to the Morgan yard?”

I peered out over his shoulder. “Yes. I couldn’t mistake that,” said I.

“Good,” said the doctor.—“Stop here.”

“And kill your engine,” Ashton admonished the chauffeur. “Don’t let it race.”

The man obeyed, and the car stopped without the noisy roar which ensues when the clutch is thrown out and the engine permitted to run wild.

We four men clambered out of the car, the girl still fast asleep, still leaning back against the cushions in the corner, undisturbed by the confusion of our dismounting from the car.

"What shall we do with her?" I inquired. "I suppose she's safe enough where she is. She'll hardly wake up until you tell her to, will she?"

"No. The sleep is hypnotic," said the doctor. "She'll be safe enough here so far as that goes. The only question is, whether we shall need her, or, rather, that abnormal scent of hers to put us again on the track of the man we want. I don't want to do it unless it's necessary, especially after that partial awakening she experienced just now. I've tried enough experiments on the human soul during the last twenty-four hours to last me a good while as it is."

"It all comes down to this," said Ashton. "If Wilkins is in the house, we sha'n't want the girl. She'd be in the way, for if he's cornered, he'll make a stiff fight. But if he's been to the house and done his work and

already got away, and we're too late for him, as I fancy we are, then we'll have to use the girl again to track him. There's no other way."

"Then the thing to do," said the doctor, "is to make a reconnaissance. If he's already been here and searched the house for what he wanted and gone away, that fact will be easily apparent, and, as you say, it's the first thing to find out. Come, we've wasted time enough. The girl will be perfectly safe here."

"Hold on," said Ashton. "Why should we all go? We might defeat our purpose that way. Send Mallory. He's worth all the rest of us put together at fences and locks, and that sort of thing. He can find out in five minutes whether that house has been entered or not, and he won't attract one-twentieth part of the attention that four of us will."

The doctor nodded.

Without waiting for any further bidding, Mallory rushed off in the darkness, up the street toward the white gate. The rest of

us stood just where we were, on the sidewalk, twenty paces or so from the automobile where our whispered conversation would not be audible to the chauffeur. We had seen no reason for taking him into our confidence, although it was obvious that he would have paid very little attention had we done so. His whole interest was centered in the condition of his car, and in the time he had made driving out to Oak Ridge under such violently adverse conditions.

We had nothing to do but wait for Mallory's return, and under such circumstances time, as a rule, drags heavily. But long before we expected his return, almost, it seemed, before he could have reached the house, we heard, coming toward us, the footsteps of a man running.

The three of us shrank back into the shadows, tensely alert for whatever this unexpected development might mean. But as the approaching figure emerged into the zone of light cut by the great gas lamps of our automobile, we saw that it was Mallory himself, Mallory hurrying toward us in an agony of

haste, beckoning frantically, his eyes blazing with excitement.

We sprang forward to meet him.

"He's there!" he gasped. "Wilkins, himself! He's up in the study!"

Instantly we set out, accompanying him back toward the white gate.

"How do you know it's he?" Ashton asked in a whisper, as we hurried along. "How do you know it isn't Green or Benson?"

"There's a light in the study," panted Mallory, "and the blinds are down; but I saw his shadow on the blind."



THE LURE

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CHAPTER XV

THE LURE

I HAD supposed that after the horrifying adventures with which this week had provided me, I was case-hardened by this time against any further sensation of nameless, indefinable dread. But the detective's words convinced me of my mistake. I knew now why he was so breathless, although he had run less than a short block. I understood, too, the look I had seen in his eyes when the headlights on the automobile had shone on them. I felt my own heart beating at suffocating speed; felt—yes, literally felt—my hair rising on end.

The feeling had nothing to do with the actual physical danger which would, no doubt, attend the capture of a relentless, remorseless villain. If the man was in that third floor room, he would never get away

without a fight, but it would be a fight certain to have serious consequences for the attacking party.

That consideration, however, far from being the cause of my terror, was actually the antidote for it. The thought that there was going to be a fight and that I should have a chance to take my part in it, was precisely what enabled me to get myself together, steady my quivering nerves and tighten my grasp upon the stout oak cudgel, which was the only weapon I had. The doctor was armed as I was, but Ashton and Mallory both had revolvers.

As we drew nearer the gate, our pace slackened cautiously. Ashton was a little in advance of the rest of us, and was the first to peer around the mass of shrubbery, which screened the house from the view of the street, except at the one point where the gate made an opening. I saw him stop and stiffen, and heard him catch his breath with a gasp.

"That's he," he whispered. "We've got him."

The next moment I saw it, too,—the sil-

houette upon the blind of a figure in cap and ulster, bending studiously forward over the desk, in the chair in which Henry Morgan had sat when he met his death. And in spite of my preparation for the thing I had known I was to see, I felt, at the sight of it, a kind of rippling thrill run through me, from neck to heel. Somehow, that grim silhouette was like a sinister variation on some familiar tragic theme.

"Yes," I heard my chief say in a piercing whisper; "yes, we've got him—unless, unless, in some way, he's counted on making us think we had him—when we hadn't."

"Why do you think that?" Ashton demanded under his breath.

"It's—it's a little too obvious," said the doctor in uneasy hesitation. "Why should he court discovery in that way? Why should he be sitting there with his shadow on the blind, when he knows that half the town has been roused by this fire?"


Ashton started forward impatiently. "This is no time for theories," he muttered.

But the doctor laid a detaining hand upon

his arm. "No," he said; "that's a valid question. If there's no trick about it, the man can't get away. If there is a trick, it's success will depend upon our doing the very thing that you propose to do—rushing ahead without stopping to think."

"Listen a minute," said Ashton, still in a whisper, but speaking with fierce impatience. "He must have set fire to that other house himself. He cannot have thought of a better scheme for drawing my men off the job. They'd no reason to expect that anything particular would happen tonight, and a burning house in the neighborhood would have an irresistible attraction for them. Once Wilkins saw them out of the house, he knew he had nothing to fear. He could make his search at leisure. And now he's found the thing he wants, has found that map that he's been dreaming about for years, he's not thinking about his shadow nor the blind it falls on."

To me it seemed that the doctor's question had been fairly answered, and I moved forward, as Mallory and Ashton did. My chief



hesitated an instant, then gave a nod of assent.

Mallory pulled open the gate. We all followed through it. Then I glanced up once more at the lighted window blind.

"Look!" I cried. "He's gone!"

One glance was all they needed. The silhouette of that figure had disappeared.

Ashton turned to Mallory and spoke so fast that the words trod on each other's heels.

"You stay outside," he commanded. "He may try the windows if he's cornered. You're the best man we've got on a chase. Don't hesitate to shoot! Come along, the rest of you!"

Together we rushed up the path, Ashton ahead and my chief and I just behind him. But, with all our haste, we ascended the steps and crossed the wooden veranda silently. The front door was not even latched. It swung back with a light push, and we were inside.

"I'll go to the kitchen," Ashton said, "and cover the back stairs, and work up from there. You two, between you, see that he doesn't get

down the front stairs, and search the rooms on each floor before you go any higher."

Both of us nodded comprehendingly, and he darted away. I stayed in the hall, while the doctor searched the downstairs rooms which made up the front of the house. I could hear him moving about the two parlors and dining-room, my strained ears never missing the sound of a foot-fall. I could hear Ashton, too. But from up above, where our quarry was, there never came a sound.

In a minute or two my chief rejoined me in the hall. "He's not here," he whispered. "Come, let's go upstairs."

As we mounted toward the second story, the sound of soft foot-falls in the corridor above came to our ears. I started and gripped my cudgel a little tighter, but the doctor shook his head.

"That's only Ashton," he whispered. "I know his step."

He was right. A whispered question, just as we reached the head of the stairway, identified him.

"We'll draw this floor next," he said, "just

as we did the other. You, Phelps, guard the head of the front stairs, I'll guard the back and the doctor can search the rooms."

Carefully as he searched, we drew blank again.

"All right," Ashton whispered. "He's still in the study, then. It's queer we don't hear him, though."

"Do you think he can have got out by one of the windows?" I questioned.

"Not with Mallory on the lookout outside. I told him to shoot, and he would. Come along! Follow me."

I dissented from allowing him to go first, but he shook his head, and, without a word, darted up the narrow flight of stairs which led to the study, the doctor and I not a pace behind him.

The study door was closed, but we could see the light shining out from under it. Just outside Ashton paused and spoke to us in an almost inaudible whisper.

"He must know we're here, and he's waiting for a rush. I'll fling the door open and that may draw his fire. If it doesn't, we'll

have to chance it. Are you both ready?"

We nodded. Ashton flung open the door. But from that silent room there never came a sound.

We waited a moment. Then, breathlessly and cautiously, we entered.

The room was empty.

For a moment we stared blankly into each others' faces. Then a grim, full-mouthed laugh from the doctor shattered the strained silence. He clutched Ashton's arm and pointed.

"Look! Look there!"

On the floor, beside the swivel chair, half under the desk, was a great caped-ulster and a hat, a bundle of bed clothes, a bolster and a small pillow.

"There!" cried the doctor; "there lies the shadow of our good friend Wilkins, but it looks as if his substance had escaped us."

"But the thing moved," I cried—"the shadow did, at any rate, moved and disappeared."

The doctor stooped and lifted up the empty sleeve of the big ulster. I well remembered

the last time I had seen Wilkins wear that. At the sight of it, the picture he had presented, dignified, bland and respectable, as he walked down the street ahead of me one Sunday morning, flashed very vividly into my mind.

But it was not to the coat that my chief was directing our attention. There was a string tied around the sleeve, a string that led up through an empty stove-pipe hole and out into the corridor. We went out to see what the other end of it was attached to, and found that it was made fast to a bell wire, in such a way as not, probably, to interfere with the ringing of the bell.

We gazed at the thing curiously and, for the moment, without comprehending. Then the doctor hit upon a solution, which we afterwards found to be the true one.

It was simple. "Like all great ideas," said he. "The first thing Wilkins did was to make fast a string between the gate and the old-fashioned bell pull in the front doorway. In that way he assured himself of getting a warning when your detectives returned from

the fire. It wouldn't allow him much leeway, but he undoubtedly calculated that it would be enough. When this house was in its prime this third floor room served, no doubt, as quarters for a servant, and it was natural that one of the bells should ring up here. The thought of the dummy had probably occurred to him in advance, and it was a good thought. It was contrived on the same principle as that upon which a sleight-of-hand performer works. Attention focused is diverted from all other points. His chance of escaping your two men, when they returned, would be vastly greater if they should rush into the house with no other idea than that an intruder was sitting in Henry Morgan's study, leaning over Henry Morgan's desk.

"But the notion of connecting the dummy with the bell wire, and balancing it so that the slightest pull would cause it to move toward the light, and then disappear, must have been the inspiration of the moment."

"Well, he's gone," said Ashton, "and he's probably got the map, though if you know where you left it, you'd better look and see."

I pulled open the drawer where we had placed it, and glanced inside. One glance was enough. The map was gone.

"He can't have gone very far," said Ashton; "that's a safe surmise; and as long as we've got that girl to track him with, we'll get him yet.—Come, there's no use loitering here."

We went downstairs and out of the house in silence, and as we moved down the path we were instantly challenged by Mallory, who came running up to us.

"Where's Wilkins," he asked. "What have you done with him?"

"Lost him," said Ashton sourly.

"But he can't have got out of the house," protested Mallory. "I'm sure nobody has got out of the house."

"We've lost him, I tell you," said Ashton. "Can't you understand plain English?"

His bad temper did not prevent the doctor from trifling with it a little further.

"What I can't understand," Ashton had said, turning to us with an aggrieved air as we were nearing the gate, "what I can't

understand is, why we thought that miserable dummy looked like Wilkins."

"Association," said the doctor; "associative illusion. Just the thing that misled Harvey when he testified about the color of the cloak, and you swore that he was lying. It was Wilkins' coat and Wilkins' square-top derby hat. We were looking for Wilkins, and the familiar shapes of coat and hat were enough to make us think—"

"Look here," said Ashton, "I've had about all the applied psychology I want for one night. Come, let's get the girl. The sooner we put her on his trail, the better I'll be satisfied."

We all halted just then, and started, a little expectant. A man's footsteps were approaching, and the next moment he halted, rather undecidedly, at the front gate. But seeing us, he turned in and came promptly toward us.

"Where's the car, gentlemen?" he asked. "What have you done with the car?"

"What's that!" Ashton roared.

"The car—the automobile that I drove you out in! Where is it?"

For a moment there was no answer to that but silence. But the silence and the dismayed astonishment on our faces, gave the man his answer.

"So you went to the fire, did you?" said the doctor grimly.

"Not for more than five minutes," the man protested. "I thought I'd see if I could be of any help—"

The man's explanation trailed off volubly, —protesting, incoherent, but we paid very little attention to it. We knew what had happened, all too well.

"Well," said the doctor, "if Wilkins only appreciated the fact, he owes us a large debt of gratitude. We told him about the map; and then we brought the girl out to him, and left her, together with an automobile for him to disappear in."

"He'd better not try to thank me," said Ashton grimly, "until the score is settled. I'll get him yet."

"No," said the doctor, "I don't believe you will. Wilkins is playing in luck, perfectly unmerited good luck. And when you combine luck with the more solid and reliable qualities which Wilkins possesses, you get a result that is almost sure to be successful."

Ashton turned away impatiently.

"But the car!" the chauffeur cried. "I'm responsible for it. What am I to do?"

Ashton told him what he might do, in three or four short, explosive words. He might have told him more, for he was furiously angry, but his wrath was diverted just then by the sound of more approaching footsteps. There were two men, and they were coming in a hurry.

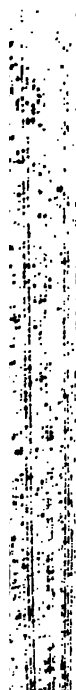
They turned into the gate without a moment's hesitation, and seeing the five of us standing there, they both whipped out revolvers. We could see the blue gleam of light along the barrels. They were the two detectives whom Ashton had put on watch.

"Throw up your hands!" one of them cried. "And don't try to move! Who are you and what are you doing here?"

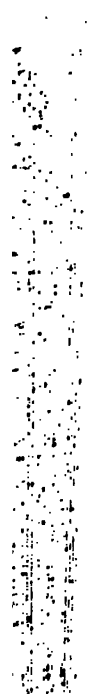
Ashton didn't obey. He strode forward, in reckless disregard of the injunction and the threat. There was something confident and authoritative about his manner, even before they recognized him, that kept them from firing.

"You're going to find out who I am," Ashton said, "and what I'm doing here."

They did.



THE LETTER



CHAPTER XVI

THE LETTER

THE doctor's prediction regarding the escape of Wilkins and the girl came true. It was all of twenty-four hours before the wires were working again; and the search, which could not fairly begin until that time, proved absolutely futile. The automobile was found next day, very early in the morning, standing in front of the Western station, the very place where we had started in it on our ride to Oak Ridge. But the oddly assorted pair, who must have driven back to town in it that night, disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up.

It was a long while before Ashton would admit the probability, or even the possibility, that he had lost them. Their escape must have rankled, for he never, voluntarily, spoke

of the Oak Ridge affair, and he treated all reference to it, however indirect, in a manner which did not encourage discussion.

My old chief was a good deal more philosophical about it, though, in a sense, it was a defeat for him as much as it was for Ashton. But he had this compensating satisfaction: he had demonstrated, beyond a doubt, the value of his methods, and when Ashton was elected as state attorney he put into practice some of the lessons he had learned so unwillingly from my chief.

I think that, in his heart, Doctor McAlister found it impossible to be sorry that Wilkins had got off. It is one thing to know, as a matter of fact, that a man is a knave and that he richly deserves to be hung; but it is another thing to wish, devoutly, for such a consummation. We had liked Wilkins, and the strange, uncanny revelations regarding his past, which the doctor's merciless instruments had betrayed to us, were not strong enough to change that liking. And even the man's undoubted villainy had been flavored with a piquant audacity and resourcefulness,

which an outraged sense baffled of justice was insufficient to make head against.

It was easy to drift into regarding the murder of old Henry Morgan not so much as a crime, as a piece of strict, though primitive, retributive justice; and Fanenna's testimony, whatever it might be worth, had half absolved the criminal of responsibility for it.

What we regretted most, in our discussions over the affair, was our fragmentary knowledge of it. We speculated, wondered and guessed at all sorts of possible answers to these riddles, but always gave up with a certain sense of the futility of this sort of occupation. One thing certain about it all seemed to be that we should never know.

But in that conclusion, strangely enough, we were wrong. Only a few days ago (and it is now more than two years since the events I have here chronicled took place) the doctor came into my office waving a letter.

"Look at the handwriting first," he said, "and see if you can guess who it's from."

I took the thing in my hand, and frowned over it for a moment in complete perplexity.

It was familiar, almost as familiar as my own, and yet I could not place it.

But as I gazed, some vague suggestion of delicate French *potages* and *entrees* came into my mind. I started, and dropped the letter on my desk.

“Not—not Wilkins!” I cried.

The doctor smiled broadly. “Read what he’s got to say.”

I needed no second invitation.

“*Doctor McAlister.*

“RESPECTED SIR:—I have long intended to write to you to tell you how Jane Perkins and I are getting along, thinking you might be interested. But I have been much occupied of late setting things to right among the natives, who are shockingly ignorant and disgustingly messy in their way of life, if you’ll pardon me the strong expression. I have taken up the white man’s burden, as the poet says, and I find that it takes up most of my time, even though this island of mine is small (about 10 sq. m.) and the population not numerous.

“Perkins and I (or Fanenna as she is

called by her own people) are married and living very happy. Now that I am, in a sort, king here—trusting that you will pardon the liberty, sir—and obliged to make all the laws as well as enforce them, I am filled with regret for my former irregularities, though I may say that they have turned out well in the end.

“However, I am very grateful to you and Mr. Phelps, and also to Mr. Ashton for your kindness and liberality to me in the past, and I am anxious that you should not think too harshly of me. You know much of my story, and I am afraid you may regard my conduct in the past as not above reproach.

“I did not murder Henry Morgan. Fannenna did, although she does not know it, and I would not tell her so for worlds. Perhaps I had better tell my story in order.

“Morgan was a villain and he deserved exactly what he got—if I may be allowed that opinion, sir. Circumstances may have justified him in killing Captain Franklin, indeed, there is no doubt that it had to be one or the other of them; and in robbing him of his money and his map, he only did what others,

perhaps, would have done in his place. But he did an inexcusable thing, when he lodged an information with the authorities against the rest of us. This act was not necessary to his escape, for he could have got off scot-free anyway. But he wanted Franklin's treasure all to himself, and he thought if he could get us all hanged there would be none to dispute it with him. I found out in time what he had done, and I escaped; but the other poor fellows were all caught and paid the penalty of their faith in a traitor.

"I went to America, but not in pursuit of Morgan. I did not know that he had gone there, and I wanted nothing more to do with him anyway, as I had decided to settle down and lead a respectable life. It pays just as well as the other and it's much more comfortable. This may surprise you, but it's true—I do not refer to the tips I earned as head waiter at 'The Meredith.' That was not my trade so much as it was my recreation. In my youth I made the acquaintance of a palm-reader and spiritualist, and this was the profession I took up on coming to your city. It

was not long before I was able to organize this industry and to hire others to do the actual work. I supervised it all, and as head waiter at 'The Meredith,' I was able to learn much about our smart people, which could be told to them again by palmists and mediums, with very good effect.

"It was in this connection that I became acquainted with Jane Perkins. A medium I employed, whose apartment was not far from 'The Meredith,' discovered her, and was using her trance states very effectively as a control. I got the greatest surprise of my life the first time I ever heard her talking Maori, a language which I understand and speak, as I suspect that you do also. From her talk I discovered that she was my old captain's daughter, and that she had inherited his secret. This was coming rather too close home for comfort, as you will well understand, so I took her out of the spiritualist business, much as I regretted to do so, for she was very valuable, and got her employed as chambermaid at 'The Meredith.'

"We were out walking together one day

when her subjective state came over her, without warning. She darted ahead of me, and I saw that she was tracking someone through the streets, by his scent. I followed her. Luckily it was dark, and we were not molested. She travelled very fast and overtook the person she was following, just as he was entering the Western station. I caught one look at him and saw that he was Henry Morgan.

“I succeeded in rousing her out of her state, for I did not want anything to happen just then and there. But I was determined to find where he lived and to get his map away from him. It did him no good, as there was neither latitude nor longitude marked upon it, and this was the secret which Fanenna had told me.

“On the night when the unfortunate incident occurred which caused you and Mr. Ashton to interest yourselves in the case, we had gone out to Oak Ridge to make an attempt to secure the map.—Nothing more than that, I assure you, sir.—I had hypnotized her in order that she might lead me, by means of her

extraordinary sense of smell, to the house where he lived, but she ran on ahead too fast for me to follow her. The crime was already committed, if you can call it a crime, before I reached the house. I saw the shadow on the blind, the same as Mr. Harvey testified he did, I being hidden at that time in the shrubbery.

“I tried to get her to go home with me, making no attempt to find the map at that time, but she was greatly excited and dangerous. So I was obliged to go away without her. I was unable to find her from that time, until she came back to ‘The Meredith’ of her own accord, the day after she made her second visit to the Morgan house at the time when you were there.

“It was during my absence from the hotel, and without my knowledge, that she answered the advertisement for the cloak, indeed, I did not know that she had done so, until you spoke to me concerning it that night at dinner. At that time it seemed safer to permit you to make the examination which you wished to make, than to try to prevent the

examination from taking place, for she was now Jane Perkins, perfectly ignorant of everything connected with the affair.

“How you found out her true connection with it, as well as mine, I have no idea. I did not know you had done so, until I tore open the envelope in the hall and found it empty. Then I knew that it was time to act. I hope you will pardon any inconvenience which my action at that time may have caused you. I hope, also, that you will pardon the liberty I take in addressing this long letter to you, but an opportunity has come to me for mailing it to you, and I cannot let it pass by.

“There is one thing more, before I close, which you may think wants an explanation. I said just now that Fanenna did not know that she had killed old Morgan, and yet she is Fanenna rather than Jane Perkins, although she is not exactly either one of them. She is no longer subject to those trance states of hers, and her character seems to be a mixture of the two distinct persons which she was before that night when you took her out to Oak Ridge with you. Her memories of all

her past are, I am thankful to say, extremely vague, though she remembers some things out of both of them. She can talk both Maori and English as well as I, and she says it is because when she was a Maori girl she heard a voice speaking to her in English, and ordering her to understand it. This seems great nonsense to me, but it may be that you will see some meaning in it. Whatever it was that happened to her, it happened that night when you took her out to Oak Ridge, because when I found her asleep in the automobile and wakened her, she was a different person in many ways from either of the two I had known.

“I will close by saying that the map which I found in old Morgan’s house that night was worth all the trouble it cost me to get it, for it has made us very comfortable and well-to-do, and has made it possible for me to make many improvements on this island of mine. It is a very beautiful place, and with the comforts of civilization, which I have been able to add to its natural attractions, is a very good place to live.

“Fanenna wishes to be remembered to you and Mr. Phelps, and also to Mr. Ashton, whom she used to admire very greatly when she was chambermaid at ‘The Meredith.’

“I should enjoy a visit from you very much, but I fear it will be impossible, for reasons which you will doubtless understand, for me even to suggest such a thing. But please believe me, sir,

“Yours most gratefully and respectfully,

“WILKINS,

“Rona Island.

“P. S. You have seen a map of this island, or a part of it, and above is the name I have given it; but I must imitate the wisdom and discretion of my old chief, and omit to mention latitude and longitude.”

The doctor met my eye as I laid the paper down. “You don’t happen to know the latitude and longitude, do you, Phelps?” he asked, laughing.

“Do you?” I exclaimed, with a rather startled look into his twinkling gray eyes.

“Do you remember those queer syllables

that Fanenna repeated to us that night when she told us her story, the syllables that neither she nor I understood?"

Then, mimicking her strange guttural voice (and I will admit that even now the mere sound of it made me shiver a little), he said, "Ouan feef, ti oues. Ten sout."

Over and over he repeated them, his smile growing broader and more tantalizing, as I still failed to understand. Then, all at once, I got it.

"One fifty west. Ten south!" I shouted.

"Not so loud," he said in mock alarm. "Ashton might hear you. And, on the whole," he added, smiling thoughtfully, but still half-seriously, "on the whole, I'd rather Ashton didn't know."

"You can show him the letter, at any rate," said I.

There came a knock at the door just then, a knock we knew.

"Come in," called the doctor. "Come in, Ashton. Here's a letter that may interest you."

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